

Unit 1

Social Background of the Emergence of Sociology in India

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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to

- Describe the historical roots of Indian sociology
- Explain the sociography in classical and Arab Persian roots to emergence of sociology in India
- Discuss the heritage of social thought in India
- Describe the socio-economic conditions which existed at the advent of British rule in India
- Explain the three major approaches of the Westerners to Indian society and culture
- Discuss the official view of the British regarding caste and tribes, their customs and manners
- Describe the growth of associations and institutions promoting social inquiry
- Explain the early sociological beginnings and finally
- Discuss the early emergence of sociology in Independent India.

1.1 Introduction

Sociology, which in India is closely associated with social anthropology, is a relatively loosely-defined area of study in this country as in other parts of the globe. Different scholars adopt different approaches to it and have even different conception of its scope. But, most of them appreciate the need for studying the socio-cultural antecedents of its birth and growth. They agree that sociology in India bears the imprint of Western sociology. They differ in their evaluation of this impact of Western sociology.

1.2 The Historical Roots of Indian Sociology

Sociology is a “humanistic social science” (Abraham, 1973). It, therefore, has to take into account the specific ideas and ideals, values and aspirations, problems and predicament of concrete groups human beings in particular historical circumstances even when it tries to attain generalisations about human relations. Sociology therefore hardly fits in the mould of natural science and its development in different countries bears in one way or another the imprint of particular historical experiences and cultural configurations. Lack of attention to the fact in India has resulted in that one cannot even today speak with much conviction of an Indian tradition in sociology whereas one could speak of a German or American tradition of sociology (cf. Mannheim, 1953:185-226). This is largely because of the fact that in their teaching and research Indian sociologists have in an overwhelming manner drawn upon the concepts, methods and theories already in use in the West instead of developing their own. The activity of the sociologists in this regard is hardly different from what is done by the physicists or biologists or even economists. But the sociologists have a special kind of reason for their worry. The relationship of data on the one hand and concepts, methods, and theories on the other in the human sciences is different from what it is in the natural sciences. When an Indian physicist formulates, Andre Beteille most appositely points out, a general rule or principle such as the Saha Equation or Chandrasekhar Limit, he takes for granted that it will be used by the physicists everywhere and not just in India. “The utility of a common stock of tools is not in question in natural sciences; but in human sciences, its very existence is in question.” (Beteille, 2002:197)

True, because of their familiarity with Western sociology and its basic concepts and categories, the Indian sociologists did not have to struggle so hard as their predecessors in the nineteenth century Europe to establish the legitimacy of sociology as a serious intellectual discipline. But their over dependence on the Western pathfinders made them forget the fact that sociology in the West was “an intellectual response, a cognitive response, to the problems which that society was facing as a result of industrialisation and the type of social upheaval and transformation that were taking place” (Singh, 1979: 107-108). The Intellectual Revolution embodied in the movement for Enlightenment, Scientific revolution and Commercial Revolution, which spanned the period between the 14th and the 18th centuries, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Industrial Revolution put a deadly blow to the age-old feudal system monarchy and the church when the saga of the aspirations and achievements of individuals and the tale of their woes started, there was great uncertainty about the values and social order in the new situation. Sociology in the West came by way of an attempt to come to grips with it. It “was very largely a kind of cognitive system which the industrial bourgeoisie in the European context tried to develop as a response, as a kind of worldview to overcome the problems of the disintegrating traditional worldview and, at the same time the disintegrating paradigms of knowledge.” But, the industrial bourgeoisie did not develop in India when sociology came to the country (Singh, *ibid*: 108).

Sociology in India was the product of intellectual response of the Indians to the Western interpretations of Indian society and culture by the Westerners, mainly after the colonial rule of the British began in India. Anthropology, the kindred discipline with sociology, too was largely the product of European expansion of the world during the last three or four centuries. The need to

govern men of various races and vastly different cultures created the urgency in the European rulers to study the life and cultures of the ruled. The Western effort to gather information of the life and culture of the Indians, which formed the basis of sociology and anthropology in India, was marked by a similar interest of the colonial rulers. It is, of course, true that later genuine scientific interests enriched both the disciplines and they emerged in the Western context of modernity. At the same time one can ill-afford to ignore the colonial context within which sociology grew in this country. Lack of adequate attention to this dual aspect of the milieu in which sociology emerged in this country tends to give it the semblance of an appendage of Western sociology. No protest, for example, is made against the statement made in 1957 by Dumont and Pocock that "... the sociology of India has only properly begun in the last ten years." What is more deplorable is the audacious statement of Robert Bierstedt who would trace the roots of sociology to Plato and Aristotle but summarily dismiss the tradition of social thought in the east. Bierstedt writes, "Although I may be guilty of a species of provincialism, I have excluded all sociologists outside of the Western tradition of intellectual history. If excuse be needed, one may say that sociology has not characteristically been a discipline that has appealed to the Eastern mind and there does not exist, in fact, a corpus of Eastern sociological thought" (Bierstedt, 1959: u). Bierstedt's is not the lone voice. The error must needs to be corrected.

1.3 The Heritage of Social Thought in India

Indeed, India has a rich heritage of thinking and reflection on the socio-cultural reality. There "have been recorded observations on Indian society since the third century B.C." (Cohn, 1969:4) India has a millennium old living tradition contained in the religious and philosophical texts. These discuss ideas about man and society. Several stereotypes impede an adequate appreciation of the Indian tradition of deliberations on man and society (Dube, 1977:2). First, it is believed that the Indian treatises discussing ideas about society and its values were deeply grounded in metaphysics and ethics and were, therefore, far removed from social reality. For example, Bierstedt writes, "In intent and emphasis,... they were ethical rather than sociological, prescriptions for right conduct rather than propositions about any conduct, whether right or wrong... .. Their authors, in short, were lawgivers to the race rather than students of society" (Bierstedt, 1959: xii). Second, they allowed little scope for development of an empirical tradition in respect of knowledge relating to man and society. Third, the ascription of inviolable sanctity to the ancient texts, it is alleged, inhibited the growth of critical and independent thought in later periods (cf. Bottomore, 1962).

The truth is that the ancient texts, shastras and smritis, despite their philosophical and metaphysical content, were not concerned with the eternal verities of truths only and did not ignore the existential reality of the time. Even Manu's Dharmashastra which has drawn the ire of a large number of critics was not a utopia providing only the outline of an idealized normative order grounded in a system of philosophy and lacking in organic links with institutions and norms of society. This treatise abstracted and schematized from a wide range of elements of the social system of its time. The assumptions and principles underlying even the concept of **dharma** related **sthana/desa** (place/country), **kala** (time) and **patra** (person/social category). To comprehend **dharma** it was not enough to learn its philosophy; its empirical referents also were crucial for its proper understanding. To take a concrete

example, one may note the detail in which Manu described the right of the **varna-samkaras** (born of parents of different **varnas**) in the then society.

Manu, the upholder of the norm of maintaining varna, did not summarily dismiss the rights of those who deviated from the norm after the fashion of Aristotle who denied the rights of those who deviated from the norm after the fashion of Aristotle who denied the rights of citizen to the slaves in the Athenian society. Further, it is often forgotten that the scope and variety of ancient social thought were very large. Besides **dharmasastras**, it also produced **arthasastras**, **kamasastras**, **vartasastras** (relating to trades and vocations, **vastusastra** (relating to construction), which related to mundane life and social reality (Bhattacharya, 1990; Sarkar, 1941).

Treatises like Kautilya's **Arthashastra** (324-296 B.C.) urging upon the king to take regular census of the subjects and the livestock or Charakasamhita (8th century BC) advising the healers to take into consideration the norms and values and customs of the people who would approach them strongly refute the charge of lack of attention to empirical data in the ancient Indian tradition.

As against the pronounced concern of many sastras with the ultimate reality and other worldly issues, there were the **Lokayata** philosophers or followers of Charvaka who were sceptical, materialist and undaunted in their criticism of this concern with other worldliness. Traces of skepticism regarding the prevalent explanation of ultimate reality or the rites and rituals purportedly related to its realisation may be discerned in the Upanishadic literature of the sixth century B.C. Ajit Kesambakelam, a contemporary of Buddha preached complete materialism.

All the treatises or activities mentioned above unmistakably represent the existence of an intellectual tradition in India in which social philosophy maintained close links with the social reality of the time. Freedom of inquiry too was asserted.

1.4 Sociography in Classical and Arab-Persian Accounts

Relatively solid empirical foundations for understanding the culture and society of India lie scattered in the writings of many travelers and chroniclers. These travelers included Greeks, Romans, Byzantine-Greeks, Jews and Chinese and, increasingly from AD 1000 onward, Arabs, Turks, Afghans, and Persians. Most of the classical accounts of Indian society follow Megasthenes the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya (324-300 BC). He had the advantage of direct observation of parts of India. He described the Indian society as being divided into seven classes, though he did not refer to the varna theory. Three Chinese travelers. Fa-Hien (AD 400-411), Yuan Chwang (AD 629-644), and I-Tsing (AD 671-695) described the socio-cultural conditions of their time in India in great detail. An analysis of their accounts in a chronological order may give a valuable perspective on change in the Indian society.

Among the Arab travelers, Al-Biruni (973-ca 1030) seems to have been familiar with Sanskrit sources and the Indian systems of thought. He mentioned the four varna theory of caste in his description of the social life and customs of the people. A sort of sociological approach may be traced in his comments on the ethnocentric predicament of the Hindu. Ibn Butta, Arab traveller

from Morocco, offered valuable information regarding the geography of the land, or socio-cultural conditions and daily life of the people of India between AD 1333 and AD 1347. For South India useful information may be obtained from the chronicles of Marco Polo who visited that part of the country around AD 1293 and in Faristah's account completed in AD 1609. All these narratives and chronicles deserve to be considered as works in sociography since their authors based their accounts on what was observed and heard and not on accounts of the past as provided by others. This evaluation is applicable also to the accounts provided by European travelers.

In the seventeenth century many translations were made from the Sanskrit literature into Persian by Indo-Moslem scholars. They paved the way for a better understanding of Indian culture and society Abul Fazl, the author of **Ain-i-Akbari** which was a late sixteenth century gazetteer containing description of Akbar's court, revenue, and administrative system, was "an empiricist par excellence" (Dube, op. cit.). He covered the widest spectrum of society in Akbar's empire, paying attention even to the remote Ahoms and the inaccessible Gonds. His work suggests that the Mughals clearly recognized that the operational level of the Hindu social system was to be found not at the plane of four varnas but at the level of kin-based categories. Writers like Abul Fazl were not sociologists or social anthropologists in the modern sense. But, they were keen observers of the social life and even "perceptive social analysts" providing valuable stuff for the making of sociology.

Box 1.01: The Early European travelers

The earliest direct observers of the Indian social system, particularly caste system, were the Portugese adventurers, merchants or administrators who began primarily on the Malabar coast. Duarte Barbose (1866, 1918, 1921) accurately reported major cultural features of the caste system which continue to be recognized as central today. Barbosa took a matter of fact approach and knew an Indian vernacular well. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, a French merchant and traveler, who provided a history of the reign of Aurangzeb and a detailed account of various Hindu beliefs, rituals and customs, which was based on conversation with the people and eye witness reports. Abraham Roger, the first chaplain at Dutch Factory at Calicut in Madras studied Hinduism from a Dutch-speaking Brahmin.

1.5 Socio-economic Conditions of India at the Advent of British Rule

The establishment of British suzerainty in the later eighteenth century prompted rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of India, of the structure of the society and of values and manners of her people by the British officials, missionaries and also Western scholars. The diverse responses of the native intellectuals to the ferment created by all these may be better understood in the light of the principal features of the Indian society and culture prevailing at that time.

As Gopal Halidar, a Marxist scholar, rightly points out, the essential features of the comparatively stable Indian socio-cultural system that persisted with minor variations down to the British times appear as follows:

- 1) *Economically*; its base was mainly agricultural, the tools and implements did not register any remarkable change through time, arts and crafts mostly connected with such poorly developed production grew.

- 2) *Socially*; its framework in the main was that of comparatively self-sufficient village communities in groups of contiguous villages; caste was the typical Indian institution to accommodate various socio-economic strata and nascent classes and bind together each in groups and ensure for such constituents an occupational protection as well.
- 3) *Ideologically*, the outstanding feature of Indian culture, the foundations of all its religion and philosophy, was the idea of karma and rebirth, which discouraged, in general, social mobility and individual initiative and secured social stability thereby.

Of course, new institutions and laws grew, though somewhat haltingly, literature, arts and philosophies blossomed. Besides, in the sub-continent regional variations also became well-marked at least from the middle ages. But the socio-economic system had since the time of Gupta Empire encouraged mainly what may be called feudal relations and a sort of Indian feudal system came to develop during the Muslim rule. Socio-economic relations akin to feudal relations lingered on even when exhausted. But, the Indian merchant classes were all through too weak and timid to overstep the socio-economic limits and develop new tools and a viable native capitalist system of larger production.

The British rule introduced, no doubt in its own interest, the railways, the press, the Western system of education, the clubs and associations which shook the prevalent socio-economic order. The British were, as if, working as “the unconscious tool of history”. But, the processes of exploitation unleashed by them destroyed the possibilities of development of industries and modern economic system in India. The British rule, rather, systematically destroyed the native industries of India for the benefit of the industries in Britain and their market in India (Desai, 1976; Mukherjee, 1957). Even though it sought to tie down the people it ruled to colonial backwardness; it released new historical forces within the Indian fold by throwing the traditional economic system and socio-cultural order out of gear. It gave birth to the desire for material advancement and better amenities and living conditions of individuals, as distinguished from groups or communities. Simultaneously, it gave birth to a spirit of inquiry into the minds of the native intellectual who came in contact with Western education. Both the social reformists and the conservatives took a fresh and critical look at their own society and culture as a reaction to Western interpretation of the same. Their ideas and explanation as well as the Western interpretation of Indian society and culture and data collected by the government officials, scholars and missionaries have laid the foundation of sociology in India.

1.6 Three Major Approaches of the Westerners to Indian Society and Culture

By the end of the eighteenth century three types of western interpretation of Indian reality became evident: 1) the orientalist, 2) the missionary, and 3) the administrative (Cohn 1968; Singh. 1979). The orientalists were enchanted by the Indian spiritual tradition mythology, philosophy, etc. Their reliance on textual view led to a picture of Indian society as being static, timeless and space less. The missionaries, who were zealots of the Christian religious traditions, looked at it as a socio-cultural and ethnic system which needed total religious traditions, looked at it as a socio-cultural and ethnic system which needed total religious conversion. Both the groups agreed

that Hinduism as practiced within the realm of their observation was filled with 'superstition' and 'abuses'. Though, the orientalist considered the situation of their contemporary Indians as a fall from a golden age. The missionaries, of course, added a lot to the empirical study of the Indian society which was strengthened by the administrators. The interpretation of Indian reality by the administrators, trained in British universities and indoctrinated by utilitarian rationalism, was more pragmatic and more matter-of-fact. Their purpose was to understand it in order to exploit its resources.

The administrators sought to develop categories that would help them in ordering their ideas and actions relating to the life of the natives of India avoiding the enormous complexities characterising it. For example, B. H. Baden-Powell's 3 volumes of **The Land Systems of British India (1892)** were not just a compilation of data but contained a series of arguments about the nature of Indian village and its resources in relation to the state and its demand over these resources. Baden-Powell recognized that there were in general two claims on the produce of the soil, the state's and the landholder's. He postulated that the government derived its revenue "by taking a share of the actual grain heap on the threshing floor of each holding". In order to ensure the collection of this share a wide range of intermediaries between the state and the grain heap developed. They asserted in their turn varying degrees of control or ownership/possession right over land and its produce. In addition, rights over the land were established by conquest.

Baden-Powell strongly contested Henry Maine's view that there was only one type of Indian village, viz., politically autonomous and economically self-sufficient village community. It continued to fascinate both the Western thinkers such as Marx and Metcalfe and the Indians Metcalfe observed, "They [i.e., The village Communities] seem to last when nothing else lasts." The idea of the unchanging village community was incorporated into general social theory of the later nineteenth and also twentieth centuries. The Marxists viewed the British rule as an unconscious tool of history" breaking the stagnation Indian society founded on unchanging village communities. The Indian nationalists on the other hand came to rely on R. C. Dutt's **Economic History of India** to establish that it was the evils of British imperial rule which degraded India from this idyllic state of village republics with agricultural prosperity to the conditions of stagnated rural economy dominated by moneylenders and rapacious landlords.

According to Baden-Powell, there were two distinct types of village in India: (1) "ryotwari" or non-landlord or severalty and (2) landlord or joint-village. But both he and Maine and their respective followers were interested in developing evolutionary stages of development of socio-economic formations. The types and classifications of villages were also attempted in relation to the institution of caste. They were found advantageous by the administrators. They reduced the need for specific knowledge. To act in terms of categories was relatively convenient. Latently, the categorical or conceptual thinking about villages directed attention away from internal politics in villages and from the questions of the nature of actual social relations and economic conditions engendered by the colonial policy. Of course, the reports such as those of the Famine Commission of 1901 and concern over widespread peasant riots and large scale alienation of land from peasant to moneylenders prompted the search for remedial action and a number of official investigations into the socio-economic conditions in the villages were made. Although some knowledge was acquired, the ground-reality was ignored.

1.7 Official View of the British Regarding Castes and Tribes

In 1769, Henry Verelst, the Governor of Bengal and Bihar, stressed the importance of collecting information regarding the leading families and their customs in addition to the cultural and social life of the natives. The revenue officers obeyed the order. Many prominent British officials followed the lead. For example, Francis Buchanan undertook the ethnographic survey of Bengal in 1807. Abbe Dubois, a French Missionary, wrote in 1816 **Hindu manners, Customs and Ceremonies**, which is considered valuable by sociologists even today (Srinivas, 2000). He was one of the first to have examined the interrelations of castes. Prior to his work, military Chaplain William Tenent's wrote two — volume work, **Indian Recreations: Consisting Chiefly of Strictures on the Domestic and Rural Economy of the Mahomedans and Hindoos** (1806). The mid and late eighteenth century western myth of "an undifferentiated orient characterised by the rectilinear simplicity of its laws and customs, the primitive innocence of its people" (Guha, 1963:26) in the face of empirical data were provided in such works. The fairly deep, if somewhat unsystematic, knowledge of Indian society started accumulating through the direct experience of many officials like Munro in his land settlements in Madras, Elephinstone in his diplomatic work in Maharashtra.

The first all-India census taken by the British Government in 1861 marked the beginning of more systematic attempts at gathering data. In 1901 Sir Herbert Risley sought to found an Ethnographic Survey of India which would develop as part of the census. He justified the proposal on the grounds of:

- 1) The contribution of such a survey to the solution of European problems with the aid of superior data available in India.
- 2) The need to collect ethnographic data, particularly the primitive beliefs and usages in India before they disappeared through social and cultural change, and
- 3) The indispensability of data for purposes of legislation, judicial procedure, famine relief, sanitation, control of epidemic diseases and the like.

The British Government finally conceded in 1905 to the demand for establishing the Ethnographic Survey which yielded huge bulk of data, valuable in anthropology and sociology in India. The volumes on tribes and castes of each province, the district gazetteers and finally, the Imperial Gazetteer of India (26 volumes, Calcutta, 1908-09) were all written as part of the Survey.

Box 1.02: Divide and Rule Policy of the British

Thanks to the work of such officials as Wilson, Risley, Barnes, Blunt, O'Malley, Hutton, and Guha, the census has become a precious source of information for demographic studies and also for social and cultural analysis. Its range and quality have further increased after independence. The census became also an instrument of official policy. For example, Risley, commissioner of the 1901 census "noted as well as deplored the tendency of the tribes to become jatis which meant their absorption into Hinduism" (Srinivas and Panini, 1973, 483). Observations of this kind contain the germs of the policy of creating divisions between Hindus and other groups and sections. It is significant that while caste distinctions among the Hindus were meticulously recorded, similar distinctions among other religious groups did not receive

equal attention, and, “ this fact seems to have gone unnoticed by Indian Nationalists” (Ibid. 474). Finally, the recording of caste divisions among Hindus at each census promoted, according to the Indian nationalists, “fissiparousness” and was therefore condemned by them. The census in independent India has ceased to record data on a caste basis.

1.8 Growth of Associations and Institutions Promoting Social Inquiry

Despite its serious limitations, the Western interest in Indian society created a ferment which led to the growth of social activity in the subcontinent (Duttgupta, 1972). A number of literary and scientific associations marked the intellectual scenario of eighteenth and nineteenth century India. Most notable was the Asiatic society of Bengal founded in 1797 by the world famous Sanskritist and Indologist, Sir William Jones. It regarded history, science, and art as the trinity of human knowledge. It encouraged work in indology, comparative philology, comparative mythology, comparative jurisprudence, history and anthropology. Its deliberations and publications including the **Asiatic Miscellany** covered a wide range of social institutions and problems. The Academic Association, started in Bengal in 1828 under the inspiration of Henry Derozio, kindled in the minds of youngmen such as Pyari Chand Mitra, Dakshina Ranjan Mukherjee, and Rev. K. M. Banerjee and questioning spirit with regard to literary and philosophical issues as well as contemporary social institutions and problems. The active but short-lived Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge (1838- 1843) examined themes like prostitution, the Hindu widow, and female education. Another notable society of the time, also in Calcutta, was Tattwabodhini Sabha. Founded in 1839, it discussed social conditions and problems and questioned several established customs and institutions. Rammohan Roy (1777-1833), whom Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru called the first Modern Man of India, was a great social thinker and reformer. His writings had considerable sociological content (Duttgupta, 1972). Rammohan’s crusade against Sati, and his views on religion, position of women, and rural society anticipated several major concerns that were to characterise Indian society later. Other notable thinkers and reformers of the time were Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820-1886), Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Pyari Chand Mitra. Such activities were not confined to Bengal alone. Yogendra Singh mentions Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Dadabhai Naoraji (1825 – 1917), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), J. G. Phoolley (1827-1888) and M. G. Ranade (1824-1901) and several others in creating intellectual and social self-awareness in the country about India’s cultural and civilizational strengths and yet pleaded for radical reforms in society in order to meet the challenges of the western civilization and its colonial expansionism (Singh Y. 2004: 13&).

As to the associations in town or cities other than Calcutta, S.C. Dube (1977: 5-6) points out that the Literary Society of Bombay deliberated on and published in 1929 in its journal **Transactions of the Literary Society of Bombay**, a comprehensive empirical survey of a small town, Lon. The volume published another comparable statistical survey of the “Pergunnah of Jumboosur.” The **Madras Journal of Literature and Science**, started in 1835, published historical and ethnographic studies and also surveys of cities and villages. The Benares Institute founded in 1861and recognized in 1864, was popular and active. Its section on “social progress” received important papers regularly on ethnography and social problems. The Oudh Scientific Society of Lucknow

was also concerned with social problems. A paper on “Sociology for India” was presented before it by Syed Shurrafoodin. A Society for Sociological Studies was established in Jaipur in 1869.

Calcutta, of course, housed more associations than other towns or cities. The Bethune Society, established in 1851, contributed significantly to social science studies. A section on sociology was started in the Society 1859 in recognition of the subject’s elevation to the rank of a “science” and of the fact that it was replete with practical benefits to man.” Reverend James Long presented to the Society in 1861 his paper comprising “500 questions on the subjects requiring investigation in the social condition of the natives.” The most notable among the insititutions concerned with the social sciences was the Bengal Social Science Association (1867-1878). Its object was “to collect, arrange and classify. Series of facts bearing upon the social, moral and intellectual conditions of Bengal, and by such means to assist in the promotion of measures for the good of the country” (cited in DuttGupta, 1972). Indians formed an important part of the members of the Association’s council. Through questionnaires the Association collected a great deal of empirical data. The papers presented at it’s meetings also demonstrated an attempt at systematisation and logical analysis of facts about Bengal and other parts of India.

Another noteworthy fact was that Positivism and its founder Auguste Comte were known to the Indians, particularly, Bengalis such as Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the famous Bengali Litterateur, and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, the first Indian author to have exmined the feasibility of developing a universal science of society, and many others. Bankim and Bhudev logically controverted the claim of Jogendra Chandra that positivism was superior to Hinduism. Positivism, however, buttressed the spirit of critical inquiry (Forbes, 1975). Herbert Spencer, the British sociologist, too, was a well known name for persons like Bankim, Bhudev or Vivekananda. His evolutionism or theory of Education was discussed and debated.

A little later, i.e., 1905 Shyamaji Krishna Verma, a non-resident Indian political and social revolutionary in Britain, deeply influenced by Herbert Spencer, started publishing a journal, **Indian Sociology**. His journal did not, however, focus upon sociology either as a discipline as enunciated by Spencer, nor did it primarily focus on social and cultural issues within the frame of reference of sociological categories. The issues discussed had a mix of the orientation of social reformism and political activism.

1.9 Responses and Reactions of the Indian Intellectuals

A close scrutiny of the records of the Associations and Societies mentioned above and the writings of native intellectuals reveals several interesting trends. A small section of the Indian intellectuals were completely overwhelmed by the West; a few, on the contrary, were drawn to the traditional heritage. Social reformers like Rammohan or Iswarchandra Vidyasagar or Jyotiba Phoole wanted to change the existing social institutions for a more humane condition. However, nearly all recognized the necessity and desirability of understanding the social situation. The question with many was neither of uncritical acceptance nor of blind rejection of the elements and ideas of the West. Persons like Bankimchandra and, particularly, Bhudev sought to reinterpret their tradition and challenge the Western interpretation

of Indian society, which presented the Indians not as subjects but as objects (Raychaudhury, 1978, Bhattacharyya, 2004). A little later Brajendra Nath Seal and Benoy Kumar Sarkar took up the threads. In case of the former, “one witnesses a critical and discursive response to the comparative evolutionary treatment of various societies and cultures, including that of Indian, by the British social anthropologists and sociologists, which often reflected not only the wrong premises in their treatment of other cultures or societies but also carried unjustifiable value (Singh, 2004: 136-147). Seal refuted attempts to interpret the Indian social and cultural reality from a reductionist, unilinear, evolutionary frame of reference. Sarkar wrote extensively in response to the writings of European Indologists and sociologists in whose writings one could clearly find the biases of ‘the orientalist frame of reference’ that depicted the Hindus or Indians to be ‘otherworldly’ or ‘pacifist.’ Particularly, the contributions of Max Mueller and Max Weber on Hinduism and the culture and social structure of the Indians came under his severe criticism (Bhattacharyya, 1990). Similarly, many other social scientists such as S. V. Ketkar, A. R. Wadia, K. P. Chattopadhyay, Bhupendra Nath Dutta (the first Marxist sociologist in this country) and N. K. Bose created through their writings the ambience for teaching and research in sociology and social anthropology in this country. Their writings and activities shared in common the consciousness of historicity of the Indian civilization and its distinct social and cultural identity which was denied the centrality it deserved by most of the western scholars, Indologists or sociologists. The writings of these early social scientists had a very high degree consensuicizing effect on the Indian academics and intellectuals to provide legitimacy to the teaching and research in sociology. The discovery of India’s past, and the antiquity and richness, versatility of its heritage gave self-confidence to the elite and the material necessary for national myth-making. European missionaries’ criticism of Hinduism and conversion of poor and lowly Hindus as well as the tribal people into Christianity whipped up the nationalist sentiments of the new elite. There was an urge for social and religious reform, a reinterpretation of the past, an assertion of identity and an examination of the present. The ground was being prepared for the emergence of sociology.

1.10 Early Sociological Beginnings

Karl Marx and Max Weber as well as Durkheim depended on British and continental writings on India for their analysis of Indian society and culture. W.H.R. Rivers’ study of **The Todas** (1906) was based on intensive field work and was the first monograph on a people of India in the modern anthropological tradition. Two of his students, G. S. Ghurye and K. P. Chattopadhyay came to play a significant role in the development of sociology and anthropology in India. Rivers’ study was followed by A. R. Radcliffe-Brown’s on **The Andaman Islanders**. During the first two decades, two Indian scholars, L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer and S.C. Roy made their mark in anthropology though both of them lacked any formal training in the discipline. In addition to his research work among the tribes of Bihar, Roy founded and edited the famous journal, **Man in India**. Iyer, because of his anthropological writings, was appointed to a lectureship in ethnography in the Calcutta University which paved the way for the first University Department of Anthropology in India.

The efforts of Brajendranath Seal for the introduction of the discipline of sociology in Indian Universities deserve special mention. As a Professor of Philosophy at the Calcutta University Seal wrote, lectured and initiated studies

on what he called “comparative sociology.” He made a comparative study of Vaishnavism and wrote a paper on race origins and a treatise on **The Positive Sciences of Ancient Hindus** (1958 [1914-1920]). He argued that social development was multi-linear and judgments regarding the superiority or inferiority of social customs and institutions hardly made any sense. He observed that social institutions could be properly studied only in the context of race, religion and culture. As Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University in 1914. Seal along with A. R. Wadia was instrumental in introducing social philosophy and sociology there. Seal also had a hand in the beginning of studies in sociology in the Calcutta University in 1907. Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Radhakamal Mukerjee, both of whom were disciples of Seal, taught the subject though there was no separate department of sociology there. Indeed, the recognition of sociology as a separate academic discipline came much later than, say, Economics or Political Science in Indian Universities.

The first department of sociology and civics started in Bombay University in 1919 under the leadership of Sir Patrick Geddes, though here too sociology was taught at first as a part of M.A. course in Economics (Srinivas and Panini, 2002). Geddes’ major focus lay on viewing social reality from a moral, communitarian, global and multidisciplinary perspective (Singh, 2004:138). He observed that “our great need today is to grasp life as a whole, to see its many sides in their proper relations; but we must have a practical as well as a philosophical interest in such an integrated view of life” (Mairet, 1957: xii). In this country he was known for his interests in town-planning, with emphasis on the problems of urban deterioration. His reports on the town-planning of Calcutta, Indore, and the temple cities of South India contain much useful information and display his acute awareness of the problems of urban disorganisation and renewal. His analysis of ‘valley section’ and his treatment of interrelationship of ‘work, place and folk for explaining the growth of regional cultures in societies reveal the strong influence of the French sociologist Le Play and his categories of ‘work, place and family’. Geddes consistently harped on the regeneration of city life and ecological awareness in the planning of social and cultural habitats at regional and global levels.

Because of the short stay in the Bombay University, Geddes’ sociological approach that revealed a strong blending of empirical methods with philosophical orientations could hardly be institutionalised. Nevertheless, Geddes exercise influence on the development of sociology in India through his students, G. S. Ghurye and N. A. Thoothi. N. A. Thoothi, in particular, observed Srinivas, tried to carry further Geddes’ line of research on his return to Bombay after obtaining a doctorate at Oxford (Srinivas & Panini, Ibid : 488). Radhakamal Mukerjee, the pioneer of Lucknow School of Sociology in India, also was influenced by Geddes as he came in association with Geddes in the urban surveys. Mukerjee subsequently carried out studies on social ecology and sociological effects of industrialisation.

G. S. Ghurye was sent to the United Kingdom (UK) by Geddes. He obtained a doctorate from Cambridge mainly for his work on caste. On his return to the country, he succeeded in finding a berth in Bombay University where he became after a few years Professor and Head of the Sociology Department. Under his leadership, Bombay became the leading centre for sociology, especially research, in the country, Ghurye had students from all over the country; some of them were heads of active departments and wrote significant books and papers. Ghurye himself wrote prolifically on a great

variety of themes. Ghurye's knowledge of Sanskrit enabled him to use the scriptures and epics in analysing and interpreting Indian culture and society. He insisted on fieldwork though he himself was an armchair sociologist.

Box 1.03: G.S.Ghurye (1893-1984)

Ghurye was catholic in his interests as well as methods. A few of his students, K. M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, and S. V. Karandikar carried his approach and concepts to materials in the sacred texts and other literature in Sanskrit. M. N. Srinivas, a structural-functionalist, A. R. Desai, a Marxist, obtained their Ph.D. in Sociology under Ghurye's supervision. Ghurye founded the Indian Sociological Society in 1952 and was the first editor of its journal, **Sociological Bulletin**.

The Lucknow University became another centre of sociology and anthropology because of contributions of Radhakamal Mukerjee, Dhurijati Prasad Mukerji, and anthropologist D. N. Majumdar, all of whom were illustrious students of the Calcutta University. Despite the concentration of such talent, sociology had only a minor place in the department of economics and sociology in Lucknow University. Radhakamal Mukerjee was greatly influenced by Brajendra Nath Seal, Benoy Kumar Sarkar and Patrick Geddes. In his earlier works he was empirically oriented and sought to build a regional and ecological sociology. He stressed the need for multidisciplinary effort to comprehend reality better. He worked and wrote on an amazing variety of social, economic and cultural subjects and philosophical issues. His **Fields and Farmers of Oudh** (1930) offer a good example of the study of agrarian studies. He wrote also on the Indian labour class. He developed a theory of human migration and settlement in which he argued that human beings, like plants, thrive best in those frontiers which are similar in environment to those in which they have already succeeded. His regional analysis was pervaded with his notion of 'Sangha' which depicted the Hindu notion of commonality and cooperation rather than conflict. His stress on the importance of myth, language, ritual, art, and symbolism made his works appear, according to Srinivas, "philosophical, if not mystical" (Ibid.: 490). But, Yogendra Singh, a direct pupil of Mukerjee, maintains that one of the most significant contributions that Mukerjee has made to sociology lies in "his formulation of a general theoretical paradigm of social science and sociology from the perspective of Indian philosophical traditions" (Singh, 2004: 142). He thus sought to offer an alternative to the Western theoretical approach in sociology.

D. P. Mukerji too, like Radhakamal, acknowledges the relevance of the Indian tradition and philosophy for arriving at valid theoretical and conceptual schemes for the study of the Indian society. But unlike Radhakamal, D. P. does not totally reject the Marxian contributions particularly its dialectical logic enunciating the centrality of the processes of conflict and contradiction in the social processes. He exposed the irrelevance and vacuity of much of thought and activity of the Indian Middle Class imitating blindly the Western ideas including both Parsonian and Marxist variants. He posited his own notion of Person over developing as a responsible agent interacting with others in society guided by dynamic tradition as against the Western, Parsonian, notion of Individual pursuing his own material interests (Bhattacharyya, et al, 2003). D. P's "same ideas regarding the study of tradition were not pursued with resolve and dedication" (Dube, 1977:9)

D. N. Majumdar, an anthropologist by training had a major concern with the

problem of culture change. He maintained that “with his expert knowledge of social relationships, the sociologist can help, predict, control and direct social change and ‘speed up social progress’.” He founded the ‘Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society’ and its quarterly journal, **The Eastern Anthropologist**. His emphasis on anthropological fieldwork and on culture inspired his students such as T. N. Madan, R. K. Jain, Gopala Sarana or T. N. Pandit who became important names in Indian sociology and anthropology.

A. R. Wadia, a founder of teaching of sociology in Mysore University looked upon sociology as applied philosophy. This university had the distinction of being the first to introduce the subject at the B.A. level in 1928-29.

A combined department of sociology and anthropology under the leadership of Irwati Karve was started in 1930s in the ambit of the Deccan College and Post Graduate Research Institute in Poona. Karve, authoress of the famous work *Kinship Organization in India* (1952) did extensive fieldwork in different parts of the country and her knowledge of Sanskrit gave her access to data in scriptures, law books and epics. Sociology Department of Poona University is an heir to the bequest of Sociology Department of the Deccan College.

The Osmania University offered in 1928 sociology as one of the options at the B. A. level. However, it was only in 1946 that a full fledged Department in Sociology was started there. Christoph Von Fuerer – Haimendorf and S. C. Dube were associated with it.

This story of early beginnings of sociology in this country should mention the contribution of Nirmal Kumar Bose as well, though he could not continuously serve the academia because of his imprisonment during the Freedom Struggle. Beginning as an Assistant Lecturer in Anthropology in Calcutta he later became the Director of the Anthropological Survey of India and the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Government of India.

Bose was basically a student of Indian civilization and culture. His approach was historical but he insisted on fieldwork by the researcher without any prejudgment in mind. His interests included tribal life, peasant society and urban centres as well as temples and pilgrims. He sought to demonstrate that production relations explained the persistence of the caste system and the changes occurring in it (Bose, 1968 and 1975). He demonstrated the unity and diversity in Indian peasant life through a study of the distribution of cultural traits across the length and breadth of India. He expressed concern over the fact that parochial loyalties were strengthened by the rising middle classes in their desire to consolidate their sectarian advantages. Though a Gandhian, he made a critical analysis of Gandhism. He instilled this spirit of questioning in the minds of his pupils and associates (Befielle, 1975).

All scholars interested in the accounts of tribes in India will remain indebted to Verrier Elwin for his valuable monographs on the Baiga, Muria and Agaria of Madhya Pradesh and the Saura of Orissa. All these are based on his first hand studies. But, Indian sociologists and anthropologists have failed to follow his advocacy for the protection of the Indian tribes from the more advanced sections of the populace. It seemed to encourage an “isolationist policy” for the tribals. You will learn more about this in Block 5 Perspective on Tribes in India, Unit 3 of this course.

1.11 Sociology and Independent India

The study of sociology and social anthropology gradually and slowly became professionalised during 1910-1950. Autonomous departments on these two subjects did not exist in more than half-a-dozen universities, and Bombay University was the only centre of post-graduate research in sociology (which included anthropology) when India became independent. Sociology and anthropology seemed to be overshadowed by economics and political science, the practitioners of which seemed to have the ability of answering questions by the nationalist leaders of the country. The association of sociology with European and American traditions made it suspect in the eyes of Indian academics. Anthropology was suspected as nationalist opinion regarded as an instrument of colonial policy (Srinivas, 2003:495). There was an additional reason for dislike of anthropology. To be studied by anthropologists often suggested that those who were studied were considered primitive, and nationalists resented this implication particularly when the anthropologists were largely from the ruling race. But, in spite of this unfriendly, if not hostile, intellectual milieu, a small band of scholars continued their work analysing fundamental social institutions such as caste, joint family, untouchability, religion and sect. They published ethnographic accounts of particular groups recorded folklore and depicted the material culture of tribes and rural people. Sociology in India at least academically could find a solid base to stand upon in the results of the work of these scholars.

Reflection and action 1.1

Interview at least three people of different ethnic/socio-cultural/class backgrounds. Tell them that you want to know about their 'marriage customs' or 'religious practices'. Have a set of questions with you to be asked from the interviewee. But silently note down your observation of her/his reaction to your request.

Write a note of about two pages on "**The Perception of Public About a Social Investigation**". Compare your note with other learners at your study centre.

Independent India was looking for a dynamic society capable of keeping pace with the tempo of economic development promised by the freedom struggle from the tutelage of colonial government. To understand how the millions of Indians with their myriad beliefs and values would respond to the call of development of the new nation was a desideratum. Sociology seemed to hold the promise for effective assistance for the task. The undertaking of planned development in the country, and the creation of national Planning Commission which later formed a Research Programme Committee, generated the demand for reliable data about the life and activities of peoples all over the country. New opportunities became available for students of sociology. Separate University Departments of sociology sprang up all over the country.

1.12 Conclusion

A perusal of the history of beginning of sociology in India dispels the misconception that there was no tradition of social inquiry and interest in learning the material conditions of men and women in this country. Despite the philosophical metaphysical and otherworldly consideration, the ancient and medieval texts bear in many cases the evidence of interest of their authors in the reality of life of men and woman on the earth and their

problems. Before the coming of the British who brought the Indians in direct contact with the West, there were travellers of many races as well as native chroniclers who produced valuable documents about Indian society and culture as well as its economy. True, at a certain stage the society seemed to have lost its dynamism because of the perpetuation of certain institutions and customs that needed change in keeping with the changing times but that were not changing. The British colonial rule gave it a jolt. But the new historical forces did not and could not work in their full strength because of the exploitative policy of the British rules. They, of course, generated a huge volume of data regarding the social, cultural and economic conditions of the people of India. But, they were manipulated and used for their own material interest.

The British rule stressed the values of individualism and pursuit by Individuals of their own material interests ignoring at times those of the communities they belonged to. The British did, of course, bring to this country the values of freedom of inquiry and rationality. Their academic colonialism enchanted a section of native intellectuals though others questioned it. However, the spirit inquiry into the nature of their own society and culture was kindled in the minds of Indian intellectuals. This interest in and access to empirical data and the questioning spirit formed the ground for the emergence of sociology in India.

Still, the hangover of academic colonialism seems to have persisted with the Indian sociologists and social anthropologists who seem to be beholden to the international reference group. Since sociology came from the west, it seems only natural in the initial days. But its persistence beyond a length of time may prove unwholesome for the development of the discipline. The nationalist upsurge was more prominent among the pioneers though it did not display richness in formulation of concepts and theories. Their pupils and followers have a greater access to the international development in sociology and have their secure places in universities and research institutes, which stand upon the labour of love and dedication of those who toiled in the past. Their effort towards understanding the specificity of Indian people before its comparison with peoples in other lands seems to be ignored. May be, it is a reason why even today we cannot talk of an Indian Sociology.

1.13 Further Reading

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Srinivas, M.N. and Panini 1986. "The Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India" in T.K. Oommen & Partha N. Mukherji (eds) *Indian Sociology Reflections of Introspections*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

Unit 2

Emergence of the Discipline : Issues and Themes

Contents

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Historical Roots of Sociology in India
- 2.3 Growth and Development of Sociology as a Profession
- 2.4 Sociology in the Post-Independence India
- 2.5 Expansion of Teaching and Research During the 1950s and 1960s
- 2.6 Some Major Research Trends During the Seventies
- 2.7 Theory and Methods Used by Sociologists in India
- 2.8 Conclusion
- 2.9 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to

- recall the historical roots of emergence of sociology in India
- explain the different socio-historical, political and cultural circumstances which led to the growth and development of sociology in India
- describe the growth and development of sociology as a profession
- explain various issues involved in the growth of sociology in post-Independence India
- discuss the expansion of teaching and research during the 1950s and 1960s
- outline some of the major research trends during the seventies, and finally
- describe briefly the theoretical and methodological orientations of sociologists in India.

2.1 Introduction

In the previous unit on “**Social Background and the Emergence of Sociology in India**” you learnt that in India, the emergence and growth of sociology discipline bears the imprint of Western sociology. Sociology as a science of society, studies its social institutions, social groups, social processes and organisations. It emerged in the Western society out of a socio-historical background which had its origins in the Enlightenment period. This period embodied the scientific and technological revolution, intellectual revolution and the commercial revolution in Europe, on the one hand, and the French revolution in 1789 on the other. The Enlightenment period stretched from the 14th century to the 18th century and had given rise to forces of social change which rocked the feudal monarchy, as well as, the Church in Europe. The Industrial revolution in England was the result of the technological developments which had taken place during the Enlightenment period brought very deep rooted changes in the nature of society and role of the individual. It had given rise to mass poverty, social evils and cultural problems. All these events gave the scholars and thinkers of that period reason to develop a science of society which could deal with these problems, find solutions, to

understand the nature of these problems and to ameliorate the condition of the poor masses who were living a life of abject poverty, crime and delinquency, and other social evils.

Besides the idea of social progress, these scholars also realised that poverty and its related social evils were not providential but had its roots in the forces of social change which the Industrial revolution in England had set in motion. Thus, the idea that poverty was socially created and could thereby be removed came to be accepted.

Here in this paper, we are going to focus more on the growth of sociology in India than its emergence. However, unless you know the social background of emergence of sociology, both in Europe, as well as, its emergence in India; the nature and growth of this discipline will not be clear to you.

2.2 Historical Roots of Sociology in India

Sociology is a “humanistic” social science even though it aims at objectivity in social observations. It has to take care of ideas and ideals, values and behaviour, aspirations and achievements, problems and predicaments of human beings in society. It cannot be seen irrespective of time and place, history and culture of societies being studied unlike the natural sciences. But sociologists have studied different human groups in particular historical circumstances and drawn generalisations about human relations from these studies.

As you learnt earlier in unit 1 of this course, sociology as a humanistic science found it difficult to fit in the mould of the natural sciences, such as, physics, chemistry, biology, etc. The debate regarding objectivity in social sciences has continued for a long time. However, our purpose to discuss this issue has been to bring to the attention the fact that sociology has developed in different countries in different manner according to their culture, tradition and historical circumstances. Its development in different countries bears the imprint of particular historical experiences and cultural configurations.

Indian sociologists being often trained in the West, were familiar with the basic concepts and categories of sociology as it had developed in the West. They borrowed these concepts and categories and applied them to the Indian context. Thus, unlike their predecessors in the West, such as, during the 19th century Europe, they did not find the need to struggle hard to establish the legitimacy of sociology as a serious intellectual discipline. But this dependence over the Western pioneers of sociology made the Indian sociologists to forget that sociology in the West was “an intellectual response, a cognitive response to the problems which that society was facing as a result of industrialisation and the type of social upheavals and transformations that were taking place.” (Singh, 1979; 107). Sociology emerged as an attempt to come to grips with the new situation which had emerged due to the social changes taking place in Western society; as mentioned earlier.

In India, however, no Industrial bourgeoisie arose when sociology was introduced. As European expansion increased, knowledge about the non-European World increased and the idea emerged under the influence of Darwin’s theory of evolution and the Victorian idea of “progress” that the non-European societies represented various stages of evolution. The

European societies, it was believed, had already reached the higher stages of evolutionary growth.

Thus, the context in which sociology, and its kindred discipline, anthropology grew in India was largely a product of the European expansion of the world in the last three or four centuries. Both sociology and anthropology arose in India as a colonial attempt to understand Indian society and culture. This colonial context is very important to the emergence of sociology and anthropology in India.

Bernard Cohn (1968 : pp. 3-28), says that “with the establishment of British suzerainty in the later 18th century, the rapid acquisition of knowledge of the classical languages of India by a few British officials, the need for administrative purposes of knowledge of the structure of Indian society, and the intensification of missionary activities, systematic knowledge of Indian society began to develop very rapidly from 1760 onward. Three major traditions of approach to Indian society can be seen by the end of the 18th century; the orientalist, the administrative and the missionary. Each had a characteristic view, tied to the kinds of roles which foreign observers played in India and the assumptions which underlay their views of India.” These have already been explained in the previous unit.

The British administrative officials, along with the missionaries, made earnest efforts to collect and record information regarding the life and culture of Indian social groups. Some examples are of Dr. Francis Buchanan who conducted the ethnographic survey of Bengal in 1807 at the instance of Government-General-in Council. Cohn (1968 : 13) mentions that ‘consistent with the relatively haphazard collection and reporting of sociological information, usually embedded in revenue reports or in historical works, the Company (i e the East India Company) directly supported surveys part of whose goal was acquisition of better and more systematic information about the peoples of India. One of the earliest and most famous endeavors to collect information was that of Dr. Francis Buchanan.’

Abbe Dubois, a French missionary in Mysore, wrote in 1816, a book entitled, **Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies** which is still valuable to scholars of India. He was one of the first to study caste and inter-relations between castes. Francis Buchanan’s work in Bengal and Bihar had set the precedent in various empirical studies undertaken by the British officials to collect, collate and publish for official as well as scholarly use detailed information about all aspects-physical, cultural and sociological of every district in India, which ultimately took the shape of Imperial Gazetteer of India published in the early 20th century. (Cohn B. 1968 : 15)

These early studies of Indian society and culture were the forerunners of more systematic attempts in the later part of the 19th century. In 1871 the first all-India census was undertaken by the British government. Census, as an institution, helped collect vast quantity of information which fell outside the normal purview by the British administrations. In 1901 attempts were made by Sir Herbert Risely to establish an ethnographic survey of India which would develop as part of the census.

As you read earlier as well, in the previous unit, the British officials were convinced about the justification and necessity for collecting this vast quantity of data about Indian Society and Culture.

It is the contributions of such officials as Wilson, Risely, Baines, Blunt, Thurston, O. Malley, Hutton and Guha that the census has become an invaluable source of information not only for the demographic studies but for social and cultural analysis as well. The range and quality of data collected have increased greatly since Independence but for an outstanding exception, the omission of the data regarding caste (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 20).

The Census, had however, led to far reaching disturbance in the society. It had set into motion certain forces of change in Indian society and especially the caste system which has left strong impact. The attempts to collect data regarding castes and their hierarchy or social divisions in each Census sharpened the self-awareness of each caste and gave rise to competition among them to claim higher positions in the caste. This effort was generally proceeded by improvement in the economic status of these castes in their region particularly. Each caste, saw in the Census a ready-made avenue for obtaining the government's approval for social mobility. The Census officers were flooded with applications from caste leaders claiming higher status.

The 1941 Census omitted caste as a category for economic reasons. However, it was only in 1951 that the recording of data on a caste basis, except for data on the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, was omitted as a matter of policy. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 21)

Indological studies also simultaneously contributed to as well as received stimulus from the efforts made by the British scholars and officials in order to develop an in-depth knowledge of Indian society and culture. K.M. Kapadia (1954 : XI) mentions that as early as 1776, a treatise on Hindu law in English was prepared, with the assistance of Pandits, for the use of British Judges.

The contribution of the great British Orientalist, Sir William Jones was also immense. He began the study of Sanskrit and Indology and is well known for having established the **Asiatic society of Bengal** in 1787. One of the main activities of the society was the publication of a journal devoted to antiquarian and anthropological interests. The study of Sanskrit provided a powerful stimulus not only to Indology but to other disciplines as well, such as, philology, comparative mythology and comparative jurisprudence.

Another major development which led to the study of social institutions in India was the introduction of British education and its impact. It set several forces of social change in motion such as, developing a sensitivity amongst the Indian intellectuals and social reformers like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar etc. regarding the social evils of sati; child marriages, illiteracy and poverty, orthodoxy of Hindu religion. Thus, the confrontation with an alien culture of the British rulers and the interpretation of ancient Indian literature by scholars like Max Muller, sharpened and redefined the self-awareness of Indian elites. It resulted in a critical appraisal and reinterpretation of Indian culture and led to its social reform.

There have been many other studies of Indian society and culture, village studies, studies of law, which together have sowed the seeds of the emergence and growth of sociology and anthropology in India. In the next section, you will learn about the growth of sociology and its professionalisation in India.

Box 2.01: Sociologists and Anthropologists in Pre-Independence India

Srinivas & Panini (1986 : 16-55) have highlighted a very significant point. According to them, it will not be an exaggeration to say that during the pre-Independence period in India, in spite of being very few in numbers, they i.e. the sociologists and anthropologists had made their presence felt as teachers, researchers and critics. This the sociologists and anthropologists did when their disciplines were not so well established and when they did not have abundance of funds for conducting research. They achieved a lot in terms of research and data collection at a time when the main task of a university Professor was lecturing and examining students.

2.3 Growth and Development of Sociology as a Profession

The discipline of sociology and anthropology has developed in India in broadly three phases; the first phase is the period between 1773-1900, when, as described earlier, the foundations for its growth were laid. The second phase is the period between 1901-1950, when the two disciplines became professionalised; and finally the third phase is the period after India gained Independence. During this phase, a complex of forces influenced the development of the two disciplines. Planned development, introduction of the Constitution and parliamentary democracy led to far reaching changes in the Indian society and its structure. During this period the Indian scholars were exposed to the work of their foreign colleagues which influenced their own work. Also availability of funds helped conduct research in several areas. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 19).

So it was in the beginning of the twentieth century that the two disciplines entered the early phase of professionalisation. Srinivas & Panini (1986 : 22) mention that 'although the bulk of the ethnographic work continued to be carried out by the British officials associated with the Census operations, professional sociologists and anthropologists in Europe began taking interest in India.' W.H.R. Rivers' published his study of **The Todas (1906)**, based on intensive fieldwork. This was one of the first monographs in the modern social anthropological tradition. Rivers did his fieldwork among the Todas, a tribe in the Nilgiri hills in South India, in the winter of 1901-2 and his interest in India continued almost until his death in 1922. He had also published papers on India, such as, on the origin of hypergamy; kinship and marriage in India in the first issue (1921) of the journal, **Man in India**. His posthumous work, edited by W.J. Perry, "**Social Organisation**" (1924) was intended to be delivered as a course of lectures in Calcutta University.

Two of his students, G.S. Ghurey and K.P. Chattopadhyaya came to play an important role in the development of sociology and social anthropology (which is a branch of anthropology) in India. His influence continued to exist in the works of G.S. Ghurey and K.P. Chattopadhyaya who held important academic positions in their respective universities of Bombay and Calcutta till the 1940s. Influence of Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown came later and they remained relatively unknown till the end of World War II. Radcliffe Brown studied the Andaman Islanders. During this period several European sociologists such as, C. Bogue, M. Mauss and Max Weber wrote on India relying on secondary sources.

Dhanagare (1998 : 37) says that the institutionalisation and professionalisation of sociology and social anthropology in India have two clearly identifiable phases - Before 1950 and after. Moreover, 1950-52 is also a watershed in a historical sense that it was then that free India embarked on programmes of planned development.

The pre. 1950 phase was essentially a phase of multi-level syntheses. It was not without significance that both the disciplines had their beginnings in the two cities of Bombay and Calcutta which symbolically represented colonialism. The beginnings were more or less simultaneous in the second decade of the present century (R. Mukherjee, 1977 : 1-193).

During the first two decades of the 20th century two Indian scholars, L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer and S.C. Roy made their mark in anthropology. Both lacked formal training in the discipline, but their achievements were note worthy. Ananthakrishna Iyer studied the castes and tribes of Cochin and Mysore and also a study of the Syrian Christians of Kerela. Roy, who was a lawyer by profession, wrote monographs on some of the tribes in Bihar. He was also a 'champion' of his tribe. In 1921 he founded the journal, **Man In India** which is still in circulation. He also wrote a book called **Caste, Race and Religion in India** (1934).

The development of anthropology in India saw a new milestone in 1905 when the British government conceded the demand for establishing the Ethnographic Survey. The output of these surveys can be seen in the form of district gazetteers and Imperial Gazetteer of India (26 volumes, Calcutta 1908-1909). These covered details on different tribes and castes of each province. Many other efforts were made to collect collate and analyse data regarding different castes, communities and tribes in India. In the previous chapter you had a brief description of these developments. You had a brief overview of the growth of sociology and anthropology in Independent India. The next section will describe the later developments a little more elaborately.

2.4 Sociology in the Post Independence India

As mentioned earlier in the first unit, sociology and anthropology were gradually introduced in different universities, initially in other departments of studies, such as, economics, social philosophy, etc. but later several full fledged departments of sociology developed in different parts of India. During the years 1910-1950, the two disciplines became professionalised. But during this phase, too, sociology was not taught in more than half a dozen universities and Bombay was the only centre of post graduate research in sociology and social anthropology in the country. There were about a dozen teaching posts in these two disciplines in different universities. (Srinivas & Panini 1986 : 33) However, as its popularity increased, its acceptance in other universities began to take place. Slowly with the expanding demand for education at all levels, more and more teaching posts in sociology and anthropology in universities and colleges were introduced.

Sociology, being a discipline at this time which did not draw from the knowledge of mathematics and statistics, such as, economics did came to be preferred by a large section of students who found it to be a 'soft option'. It is only later that sociology syllabi became more standardized, and some universities made provision for teaching research methodology and statistics at the masters level. In due course of time sociology gained a prestige and

it is at present one of the coveted subjects chosen by students at college and university levels.

Reflection and Action 2.1

Interview five students who have opted for sociology courses at B.A. or M.A. level at your study centre. Ask them for the reasons for choosing this subject. Now compare their reasons with your own and write a note of one page on “Relevance of Sociology : Nature and Scope.”

You may discuss your note with your Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

2.5 Expansion of Teaching and Research During the 1950's and 1960's

In the post-Independence period, with the introduction of planned development in the country and creation of the National Planning Commission, significant changes started taking place in the growth and development of sociology and anthropology in India. Research and training institutes began to multiply in India to meet the demand for information introduced by the state, to analyse and evaluate their functioning. Also, qualified, trained people were needed to man the various institutes, as well as the government agencies which had cropped up during this period.

A Research Programme Committee for funding the social science research related to planning and development was created by the Planning Commission. The creation of a Programme Evaluation Board in the Planning Commission with branches in each state created jobs for sociologists and anthropologists. Along with this development another important development took place, which was an increase in the awareness of the relevance of the social sciences to the process of planning amongst the educated. This, was reflected in the Planning Commissions recommendation in 1966 to found an Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). V.K.R.V. Rao, member in-charge of Education in the Commission, was responsible for this recommendation. ICSSR came into existence in September, 1969 with the late D.R. Gadgil as its first Chairman. (Srinivas & Panini, 1986 : 37)

Reflection and Action 2.2

Find out a few details about either, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) or University Grants Commission (UGC). The area of research currently going on and being funded by these organisations these days. You may visit their website, if possible, at any Cyber Cafe, near your home. Write a note including these details and discuss it with other students of sociology at your Study Centre.

The increase in the awareness of the relevance of sociology and social anthropology by the educated elites and government officials and policy makers in Independent India can also be seen reflected in the development grants for starting new departments or expanding existing university departments given by the University Grants Commission (UGC). This euphoria of ‘development’, says Dhanagare (1993 : 46), explains to a large extent the institutionalisation and expansion of sociology and social anthropology in Indian universities after 1950. To facilitate this expansion the UGC sanctioned new posts in different universities all over India through the Five Year Plan development grants.

In the pre-1950 period, Indian sociology and social anthropology had followed the dominant trends in British social and cultural anthropology especially that of B. Malinowski's functionalism with its culturalological strain. After 1950 the influence of American rural sociology started being seen on Indian sociology and social anthropology in addition to the British. (R Mukherjee, 1977 : 47). The reasons for this development lay in the increased contacts with America, particularly the role of Ford Foundation was significant and there was acceptance of the ideology and programme of Community Development by the Indian government.

The Ford Foundation in India succeeded in transplanting the idea of community development into Indian planning between 1951 and 1970. Its indispensability as a crucial tool of social reconstruction and as an agency of development, especially in the rural areas, was accepted by the government. It was this package of community development, Dhanagare (1993 : 47) says, that opened up job opportunities for Indian social scientists in general and sociologists and social anthropologists in particular. They could obtain funds for research projects to study Indian villages, to investigate the impact of the community development programmes on the villages and their response to the programme. Large-scale surveys were conducted to assess and evaluate the effectiveness of the community development programmes for the purpose of administrators. This required the sociologists and social anthropologists in India to get acquainted with modern survey research methods and procedures of empirical social sciences developed in the West, particularly in the United States. To meet these demands courses on research methodology were introduced into the teaching curriculum of sociology and social anthropology in India. (Beteille, 1973 : 224-31)

The community development programmes in many ways helped in the growth and development of the twin disciplines, sociology and social anthropology in India but it had its negative side as well. Most of these research studies were quantitative rather than qualitative. The state controlled directly and indirectly the nature of these studies. Thus these studies could not come of age in the true sense of the term. They failed to develop their own identity even after 1950s.

According to Dhanagare (1980 : 25-26) it was primarily the official patronage and the Ford Foundation largesse which attracted a number of sociologists and social anthropologists to this area of study. There was nothing inherently wrong with this trend of research in the two disciplines but the problem was that research priorities were practically dictated by the state whose action as well as policy concerns came to be echoed in social science seminars and conferences.

Another significant impact of the community development programme on sociology and social anthropology in India was that its proximity with the state and government policy formulating bodies became "an index of academic status and recognition. This new status transformed the earlier interaction between two or more disciplines into an almost pathological competition for resources as well as recognition". (Dhanagare, 1993 : 48)

There was stiff competition among various social science disciplines to get the best projects and assignments from the establishment. This competition hampered any inter disciplinary dialogue or cooperation between the different disciplines in social sciences and as a result their growth and development

became compartmentalized and narrow. Although, there was at that time considerable discussion on the desirability of an inter disciplinary approach; in reality the social sciences remained confined to their rigid boundaries until 1970. Dhanagare (1993 : 49); says that not only were sociology and social anthropology estranged from economics, history, political science and philosophy with which they had either co-existed and often interacted in pre-1950 period, but also, in this process they themselves became estranged from each other. In the pre-1950 phase they had maintained a very productive and symbiotic relationship. In the 1960s and 1970s the trend was clearly in favour of a separation of sociology and social anthropology in most of the Indian universities except for Bombay and Saugar. The newly started central universities, like Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi), NEHU (Shillong) and Hyderabad favored the older pattern by setting up a joint department of sociology and social anthropology.

In Delhi, (i.e. Delhi University) although sociology and anthropology were separate departments from the beginning, the Sociology department, situated in Delhi School of Economics, emphasised social anthropology. According to Dhanagare (1993 : 49) without the interaction with sociology, anthropology was invariably reduced to ethnology and physical anthropologists and social/cultural anthropologists had little in common except shared office space and administrative and financial control. It is due to these reasons that the relationship between sociology and social anthropology in India have an ambivalent status. Even ICSSR which was set up by Government of India in 1969, decided to conduct a combined survey (trend reports) on sociology and social anthropology in India, but for some reason maintained a separate panel of experts for both the disciplines. UGC also followed the same trend.

The ICSSR contributed immensely to the growth and development of sociology and social anthropology in India. It more or less replaced the Research Programmes Committee of the Planning Commission in terms of the functions that it performed. It is an autonomous body and financially independent which has supported several university departments through funds for research projects, seminars and workshops, publication of books and journals, data analysis and consultancy. It also offers short term or long term fellowships both for junior or senior members of the profession. Dhanagre (1993 : 50) writes that ICSSR's many schemes were sufficiently broad based as well as egalitarian to inspire confidence among all social scientists including sociologists and social anthropologists. It has played a positive and constructive role in the growth of both the disciplines in India since 1969 onwards.

2.6 Some Major Research Trends During the Seventies

The seventies period saw a further continuation and diversification of interests and specialisations in substantive areas of research and teaching since the nineteen sixties M.S.A. Rao (1986 : 168-178) says that while village community studies dominated researches earlier, interests in such problems as agrarian relations, land reforms, peasants, agricultural labourers, scheduled castes and tribes began to attract increasing attention of sociologists and social anthropologists. The seventies could be reviewed under three heads: (i) areas of interests and specialisations which get crystallised, (ii) areas of interest which have developed but not yet got crystallised; and (iii) emergence of new approaches in the established areas.

Peasant studies and agrarian social structure emerged as a distinct area of research interest in the seventies (Beteille 1974, Oomen 1975, 1977, Alexander 1975, Joshi 1975, Joan Mencher 1978). These studies marked a departure from the earlier village community studies with emphasis on caste and village solidarity. However, village studies continued to hold the attention of some sociologists (For example Srinivas 1976).

Closely related with the area of peasant studies is the study of peasant movements which attracted the attention of some sociologists (Dhanagare 1974, Ranga Rao 1978, PN Mukharjee 1978, Rajendra Singh 1978 and A R Desai 1979). Besides the sociologists, historians have also developed a major interest in agrarian history. The studies on peasant movements is, however, a part of the study on social movements in general which became crystallized during the 1970s. Studies on several types of movements, such as, the backward classes movements, sectarian movements have been published (M.S.A. Rao 1978, 1979 a, 1979nb).

Three other areas of interest in sociology which got crystallized during the seventies were — (1) industrial sociology, (2) urban sociology, and (3) social stratification.

In industrial sociology there have been works of N.R. Sheth and P.J. Patel (1979) which trace the trends in the development of industrial sociology. There have been studies of trade unions and industrial relations (E.A. Ramaswamy 1977, 1978). A few university departments are teaching industrial sociology at the M.A. and M. Phil levels. Urban sociology had long been neglected in India due to the misconception that India was a village society. But during the 1970s it gained importance. Problems of rural-urban migration, urban development and slums attracted the attention of the sociologists and social anthropologists. Different aspects of urban sociology have been studied, such as, rural-urban migration, demography, and neighbourhoods, slums, stratification, education, ethnic conflict, etc. (M.S.A. Rao 1970, 1974, Saberwal 1976, 1978, Sylvia Vatuk 1972 and Richard Fox 1970). Urban slums also attracted special attention (Desai and Pillai 1970, 1972, Weibe 1975; Alfred De Souza 1979 and others).

Another major area of interest and specialisation was social stratification in the seventies. A large number of studies were published in seventies, such as, the efforts of Andre Beteille (1977), Yogendra Singh (1977), Victor D'Souza (1977). Several studies of elites appeared in the seventies (Singhi 1974; Sheokumar Lal 1974). Social stratification is a common course taught in almost all the universities and colleges teaching sociology.

Several studies in different areas of specialisation appeared during this period, such as, in the area of sociology of development, sociology of education, and so on. Many new areas appeared, such as, sociology of profession, sociology of organisation, medical sociology, studies on women, etc.

Dhanagare (1993 : 51) mentions that inspite of a lot of changes taking place in the field of sociology and social anthropology since the 1950s, not all the research concerns were abandoned. Infact, the continuity of research concerns is striking. New trends have emerged too, but the old ones came to be consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s. Most important of these themes were such as caste and stratification, family and kinship, religion and ritual, and village social organisation. These topics continued to preoccupy

sociologists and social anthropologists. Above all, caste and stratification proved to be such a significant structural reality in Indian society that it continued to hold the attention of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists. But, here too, one can observe a qualitative difference in the caste stratification studies conducted in recent years.

Srinivas's studies of caste and religion (1952, 1959, 1962, 1966) employed not only the structural-functional nature of caste and religion but also the dynamics of caste system in Indian villages. He developed the conceptual tools to study the processual aspects of caste such as, sanskritisation, westernisation; concept of 'dominant caste' to understand the power relations within the village society. YB Damle (1968 : 95-102) advocated the use of reference group theory in explaining caste mobility, Andre Beteille (1965) used the Weberian framework of class, status and party to study 'caste, class and power' in a Tanjore village.

Box 2.02: Relevance of Sociology : An Opinion

D.N. Dhanagare opines (1993 : 28) about the role and relevance of sociology in strong words. He says that "vast sections of the under-privileged in the Indian society, who have failed to make it through the 'mobility' route, are going to resort to the alternative 'mobilization' route to social transformation. What are the prospects of 'mobilization', where is it likely to lead, and would social scientists, including sociologists, like to be just silent, indifferent spectators of the transformation process or would they like to contribute to it in some measure? These are some of the questions the sociology profession as a whole must address itself to, sooner than later."

Louis Dumont, a French sociologist studied caste in India using the structuralist method in his famous book **Homo Hierarchicus** (1970). He revived the interest in 'caste' studies in the 1970's. He focused on the need to understand the ideology of caste as given in the Hindu scriptures and classical texts. He advocated the use of an Indological and structuralist approach to the study of caste system and village social structure in India.

Different aspects of caste and stratification system attracted the attention of sociologists and social anthropologists. Political developments in India, impact of community development programmes, panchayati raj, democratic decentralisation and several other developments during the 1950's had far-reaching consequences. Indian sociologists and social anthropologists were concerned about studying the impact of these changes on the Indian social and rural social structure. (S.C. Dube, 1969, RN Haldipur, 1974). Studies on caste and power structure in rural society came to occupy a predominant position. (Dhanagare, 1993 : 52)

A new trend in sociological research developed in the 1960's and 1970's in the area of rural sociology. The new interests focused on the basic changes in the rural social structure initiated through land reform measures since Independence. The new trends gave more attention to class formation among the peasantry, social mobility among different rural strata and the newly emerging contradictions in the rural areas. This new trend turned from 'micro' level inquiries to 'macro' level analytical exercises. (Yogendra Singh, 1977 : 22-23)

Closely affiliated to the new trend in agrarian studies in sociology has been

the trend of studying social movements, particularly among the peasantry. AR Desai's (1948) study of the Indian National Movement and its social background, describing its class character and its inherent contradictions was a very significant and pioneering contribution from the pre-1950 era.

During the 1980's several of the areas of interest from the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's onwards continued to gain strength. Many new areas also emerged, such as of sociology of deviance, sociology of law, sociology of knowledge, sociology of science, etc. These and several other areas have been increasingly been the focus of study of sociologists and social anthropologists in India.

Along with the areas of interest even the sociological approach to study these areas have varied. The theoretical underpinnings of the research studies and the methodology used by different sociologists has been different.

2.7 Theory and Methods Used by Sociologists in India

According to Dhanagare (1993 : 63) the theoretical orientations of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists seems to have changed. It may be said that the appeal of 'philosophical theoretical orientation' (a la Radha Kamal Mukherjee), and 'structural-functional' and 'culturological' approach (a la Radcliffe Brown. MN Srinivas. etc.) is declining. Dialectical historical orientation-often based on Marxist methods and propositions - has, of late, shown a profound capacity for adaptation and innovation (Singh, Y. 1977 : 25-26). This orientation has now become popular amongst the younger generation of sociologists.

The 'structuralist' approach or theoretical orientation too has been quite popular and is reflected in the works of such sociologists as J.P.S. Oberoi (1974, 1978), T.N. Madan (1975) and Veena Das (1977). This trend is likely to gain more popularity in the coming years. (M.S.A. Rao, 1979 b : 1812) The systemic theoretic orientation is seen in some of the writings of MS Gore, Yogendra Singh, Y.B. Damle, Yogesh Atal and a few others. But no significant advances have been made on this front in recent years. P.N. Rastogi has been the lone follower of the cybernetic approach (See Rastogi, 1973, 1975).

Briefly described, these are some of the major trends of research in sociology and social anthropology in India. The theoretical approaches and methods to conduct research has been very many and some of the important theoretical approaches used by different sociologists has been mentioned here only as an example to explain to you the rich literature that exists in the field of sociology and social anthropology.

2.8 Conclusion

The first paper "Social Background of the Emergence of Sociology in India" of this block Number 1 **Emergence of Sociology in India**, and the present paper on "Emergence of the Discipline : Issues and Themes" are the introductory papers on the general theme of this course on **Sociology in India**. The social background which enabled the discipline of sociology and social anthropology to take root in the rich soil of India where a classical

literary tradition already existed laid the intellectual moorings of the new discipline and its institutions.

As described in the beginning of both the papers, sociology and social anthropology bore a strong imprint of the sociology in the Western society. It came as a product of an intellectual response of the Indians to the Western interpretation of Indian society and culture by the Westerners. As the European invasion and expansion over the non-European territory increased, the need to understand the new societies and communities developed. For several reasons, some philanthropic, some pragmatic, the scholars from the Western societies tried to interpret social reality in India and use this knowledge for other purposes, of proselytisation, for amelioration of social evils and orthodoxy of the traditional Hindu society, welfare of the tribals etc.

Thus, the colonial impact and the confrontation of the Western outlook with the Eastern way of life produced a body of literature which became the foundation for the emergence of the sociology and social anthropology disciplines.

Later, in the present paper the description of the professionalisation of the discipline from 1900-1921 onwards has been described. It was not a coincidence that the disciplines developed professionally first in cities like, Bombay, Calcutta and Lucknow and slowly spread throughout the country after the 1950's. The colonial context, therefore, cannot be denied. It was during the 1950's that later professional developments and acceptance of the discipline in different universities took place. The prestige of sociology and social anthropology grew, after the Independence period when planned development was introduced. Trained manpower to staff the Institutes etc. and to conduct research and training for collecting information about the impact of the various Community Development Programmes, Panchayati raj, etc. developed.

ICSSR was founded in 1969 and the University Grants Commission (UGC) provided funds for research to the social scientists. Relevance of the social sciences generally and sociology and social anthropology particularly developed.

Finally, we have described some of the research trends in Indian universities in sociology and social anthropology from the 1950's, 1960's, 1970's till the 1980's. Briefly the theoretical orientations have been described to explain the development of the disciplines in India.

2.9 Further Reading

Dhanagare, D.N. 1995 *Themes and Perspectives in Indian Sociology*; Rawat Publications, New Delhi

Singh, Y.1986 *Indian Sociology : Social Conditioning and Emerging Concerns*; Vikas Publications, New Delhi

Unit 3

Village Studies in India

Contents

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Historical Background
- 3.3 The Context
- 3.4 Field and the Fieldwork
- 3.5 Perceived Significance of the Village
- 3.6 General Features of the Village
- 3.7 Social Structure of the Village : Caste, Class and Gender
- 3.8 'Field-View' and the Fieldwork
- 3.9 Conclusion
- 3.10 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Provide a historical background to the emergence of 'village studies' in India
- describe the general context in which the village studies were undertaken
- explain the how and why sociologists/social anthropologists chose this field of study
- discuss why the study of villages in India came to gain importance
- outline the general features of the village
- describe the social structure of the village which involves the description of caste, class and gender as significant aspects, and finally
- explain the nature of the 'field view' and the fieldwork done by the sociologists/social anthropologists.

3.1 Introduction

So far you have learnt about the social background of the emergence of sociology in India, its later development and growth and some major issues and themes of research. Village studies, during the 1950s and 1960s constituted a major area of concern and several monographs and papers were published during this period of growth and professionalisation of the discipline. In the present unit you will learn more about these village studies.

Village occupies an important place in the social and cultural landscape of contemporary India. Notwithstanding India's significant industrialisation over the last five or six decades, and a considerable increase in its urban population, a large majority of Indians continue to live in its more than five lakh villages and remain dependent on agriculture, directly or indirectly. According to the 2001 Census, rural India accounted for nearly 72 per cent of India's total population. Similarly, though the share of agriculture has come down to around one-fourth of the total national income, nearly half of India's working population is directly employed in the agricultural sector.

Apart from it being an important **demographic** and **structural** reality characterising contemporary India, village has also been an important

ideological category, a category through which India has often been imagined and imaged in modern times. The village has been seen as the ultimate signifier of the “authentic native life”, a place where one could see or observe the “real” India and develop an understanding of the way local people organise their social relationships and belief systems. As Andre Beteille writes, ‘The village was not merely a place where people lived; it had a design in which were reflected the basic values of Indian civilisation’ (Beteille 1980:108). Institutional patterns of the Indian “village communities” and its cultural values were supposed to be an example of what in the twentieth century came to be known as the “traditional society”.

This unit will provide you an overview of the tradition of “village studies” among sociologists and social anthropologists in India. Apart from looking at the manner in which the village social life was studied, the methods used and issues/questions focussed on, the unit will also offer a critical assessment of the tradition of village studies.

3.2 Historical Background

Though one may find detailed references to village life in ancient and medieval times, it was during the British colonial rule that an image of the Indian village was constructed by the colonial administrators that was to have far reaching implications — ideological as well as political — for the way Indian society was to be imagined in the times to come.

Along with the earlier writings of James Mill, Charles Metcalfe’s notion of the Indian village community set the tone for much of the later writings on rural India. Metcalfe, in his celebrated remark stated that ‘the Indian village communities were little republics, having nearly everything they wanted within themselves, and almost independent of foreign relations. They seemed to last where nothing else lasted. Dynasty after dynasty tumbled down; revolution succeeded revolution but the village community remained the same.’ (as in Cohn, 1987:213). Though not all colonial administrators shared Metcalfe’s assessment of the Indian village, it nevertheless became the most popular and influential representation of India. The Indian village, in the colonial discourse, was a self-sufficient community with communal ownership of land and was marked by a functional integration of various occupational groups. Things as diverse as stagnation, simplicity and social harmony were attributed to the village which was taken to be the basic unit of Indian civilisation. ‘Each village was an inner world, a traditional community, self-sufficient in its economy, patriarchal in its governance, surrounded by an outer one of other hostile villages and despotic governments.’ (Inden, 1990:133).

In many ways, even in the nationalist discourse, the idea of village as a representative of authentic native life was derived from the same kind of imagination. Though Gandhi was careful enough not to glorify the decaying village of British India, he nevertheless celebrated the so-called simplicity and authenticity of village life, an image largely derived from colonial representations of the Indian village. The decadence of the village was seen as a result of colonial rule and therefore village reconstruction was, along with political independence, an important process for recovery of the lost self (see Jodhka 2002).

In the post-Independence India also ‘village’ has continued to be treated as

the basic unit of Indian society. Among the academic traditions, the study of village has perhaps been the most popular among the sociologists and social anthropologists working on India. They carried-out a large number of studies focussing on the social and cultural life of the village in India. Most of these studies were published during the decades 1950s and 1960s. These “village studies” played an important role in giving respectability to the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology in India.

Generally basing their accounts on first-hand fieldwork, carried out mostly in a single village, social anthropologists focused on the structures of social relationships, institutional patterns, beliefs and value systems of the rural people. The publication of these studies also marked the beginning of a new phase in the history of Indian social sciences. They showed, for the first time, the relevance of a fieldwork based understanding of Indian society, or what came to be known as “**field-view**” of the India, different from the then dominant “**book-view**” of India, which was developed by the **Indologists** and **orientalists** from classical Hindu scriptures.

3.3 The Context

After the colonial administrators/ethnographers, it was the “young” discipline of social anthropology that took up the study of Indian village during 1950s and 1960s in a big way. This new interest in the village social life was a direct offshoot of the newly emerged interest in the study of the peasantry in the Western academy.

Emergence of the so-called “new states” following decolonisation during the post war period had an important influence on research priorities in the social sciences. The most significant feature of the newly emerged ‘third world’ countries was the dependence of large proportions of their populations on a stagnant agrarian sector. Thus, apart from industrialisation, one the main agenda for the new political regimes was the transformation of their “backward” and stagnant agrarian economy. Though the strategies and priorities differed, ‘modernisation’ and ‘development’ became common programmes in most of the Third World countries.

Understanding the prevailing structures of agrarian relations and working out ways and means of transforming them were recognised as the most important priorities within development studies. It was in this context that the concept of ‘peasantry’ found currency in the discipline of social anthropology. At a time when primitive tribes were either in the process of disappearing or had already disappeared, the “discovery” of the peasantry provided a new lease of life to the discipline of social anthropology.

The ‘village community’ was identified as the social foundation of the peasant economy in Asia. It is quite easy to see this connection between the Redfieldian notion of ‘peasant studies’ (Redfield 1965) and the Indian ‘village studies’. The single most popular concept used by the anthropologists studying the Indian village was Robert Redfield’s notion of ‘**little community**’. Among the first works on the subject, *Village India: Studies in the Little Community* (edited by M. Marriot, 1955) was brought out under the direct supervision of Redfield. He even wrote a preface to this book.

Having found a relevant subject matter in the village, social anthropologists (many of whom were either from the West or were Indian scholars trained

in the Western universities) initiated field studies in the early 1950s. During October 1951 and May 1954 the *Economic Weekly* (which later became *Economic and Political Weekly*) published a number of short essays providing brief accounts of individual villages that were being studied by different anthropologists. These essays were later put together by M.N. Srinivas in the form of a book with the title *India's Villages* in 1955. As mentioned above Mackim Marriot's book *Village India* also appeared in the same year. Interestingly, the first volume of *Rural Profiles* by D.N. Majumdar also appeared in 1955. S.C. Dube also published his full length study of a village near Hyderabad, *Indian Village* in the same year.

Box 3.01: Views of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru on Village in India

Mahatma Gandhi in his letter to Shri Jawaharlal Nehru on October 5, 1945 originally written in Hindi expressed his views on village, in general and specially in India. He wrote “..... I am convinced that if India is to attain true freedom and through India the world also, then sooner or later the fact must be recognised that people have to live in villages, not in towns, in huts, not in palaces. Crores of people will never be able to live in peace with each other in towns and palaces. They will then have no recourse but to resort to both violence and untruth. I hold that without truth and non-violence there can be nothing but destruction for humanity. We can realise truth and non-violence only in the simplicity of village life.....”

Jawaharlal Nehru, in his reply to Bapu's letter, wrote amongst other things, that, “The whole question is how to achieve this society and what its content should be. I do not understand why a village should necessarily embody truth and non violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment. Narrow-minded people are much more likely to be untruthful and violent.” (The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Vol. IV. Selected Letters General Editor Shriman Narian. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. pp. 98-101)

There was a virtual explosion of village studies in the sixties and seventies. ‘Although social anthropologists were the first in the field which they dominated throughout, scholars from other disciplines — political science, history, economics, and so on — were also attracted to it’ (Beteille, 1996:235). Though most of the studies provided a more general account of social, economic and cultural life of the rural people, some of the later studies also focused on specific aspects of the rural social structure, such as, stratification, kinship, or religion.

3.4 Field and the Fieldwork

An anthropologist typically selected a single “middle” sized village where he/she carried-out an intensive fieldwork, generally by staying with the “community” for a fairly long period of time, ranging from one to two years, and at the end of the stay he/she was supposed to come out with a “holistic” account of the social and cultural life of the village people.

The most important feature that qualified these studies to be called anthropological was the fieldwork component and the use of “**participant-observation**”, a method of data collection that anthropologists in the West

had developed while doing studies of tribal communities. The “participant-observation” method was seen as a method that understood social life from within, in terms of the values and meanings attributed to it by the people themselves.

Box 3.02: Participant Observation

The method of participant observation also provided continuity between the earlier tradition of anthropology when it studied the tribal communities and its later preoccupation with the village. As Beteille writes:

In moving from tribal to village studies, social anthropologists retained one very important feature of their craft, the method of intensive field work.... Those standards were first established by Malinowski and his pupils at the London School of Economics in the twenties, thirties and forties, and by the fifties, they had come to be adopted by professional anthropologists the world over (Beteille, 1996:233-4).

3.5 Perceived Significance of the Village

The discovery of peasantry thus rejuvenated the discipline of social anthropology. In the emerging intellectual and political environment during the post war period, anthropologists saw themselves playing an important role in providing authentic and scientific account of the “traditional social order”, the transformation of which had become a global concern. Many of the village monographs emerged directly from the projects carried-out by sociologists and social anthropologists for development agencies. These included studies by Dube (1955), Majumdar (1958), and Lewis (1958). Lewis, who studied a village near Delhi writes:

Our work was problem oriented from the start. Among the problems we studied intensively were what the villagers felt they needed in housing, in education, in health; land consolidation programme; and the newly created government-sponsored panchayats (Lewis, 1958:ix).

Lewis was appointed by the Ford Foundation in India to work with the Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission to help in developing a scheme for the objective evaluation of the rural reconstruction programme.

A typical anthropologist, unlike his/her economist counterpart, saw the village ‘in the context of the cultural life lived by the people’ and the way ‘rural life was inter-locked and interdependent’ which ‘baffled social engineers as it could not be geared to planned economy. It was here that the economists needed the assistance of sociologists and anthropologists’ (Majumdar, 1955:iv).

Though they were supposed to only assist the ‘big brothers’ economists in the planning process, the anthropologist viewed their perspective as being “superior” because ‘they alone studied village community as a whole, and their knowledge and approach provided an indispensable background for the proper interpretation of data on any single aspect of rural life. Their approach provided a much-needed corrective to the partial approach of the economist, political scientist and social worker (Srinivas, 1955:90).

Anthropologists criticised economists and official planners view because they tended ‘to treat people like dough in their hands. The fact that people had

resources of their own, physical, intellectual and moral, and that they could use them to their advantage, was not recognised by those in power' (Srinivas, 1978:34).

While economists used **quantitative techniques** and their method was "more scientific", the anthropological approach had its own advantages. Anthropological studies provided **qualitative analysis**. The method of anthropology required that its practitioners selected 'a small universe which could be studied intensively for a long period of time to analyse its intricate system of social relations' (Epstein, 1962:2).

However, not all of them were directly involved with development programmes. In fact most of them saw the relevance of their works in professional terms. Taking a position against the close involvement with official agencies, Srinivas argued that 'the anthropologist has intimate and first hand knowledge of one or two societies and he can place his understanding at the disposal of the planner. He may in some cases even be able to anticipate the kind of reception a particular administrative measure may have. But he cannot lay down policy because it is a result of certain decisions about right and wrong' (Srinivas, 1960:13). Thus maintaining a "safe" distance from the political agencies was seen to be necessary because, unlike economics, social anthropology did not have a theoretical grounding that could help them become applied sciences.

The relevance of studying the village was viewed more in methodological terms. The village and its hamlets represented "**India in microcosm**" (Hoebel in Hiebert, 1971:vii). For the anthropologist, they 'were invaluable **observation-centres** where he/she could study in detail social processes and problems to be found occurring in great parts of India' (Srinivas 1955: 99). Villages were supposedly close to people, their life, livelihood and culture and they were 'a focal point of reference for individual prestige and identification'. As 'an important administrative and social unit, the village profoundly influenced the behaviour pattern of its inhabitants'. Villages were supposed to have been around for 'hundreds of years', having 'survived years of wars, making and breaking up of empires, famines, floods and other natural disasters'. This perceived 'historical continuity and stability of villages' strengthened the case for village studies (Dasgupta, 1978:1).

Carrying-out village studies during the fifties and the sixties was also important because the Indian society was changing very fast and the anthropologist needed to record details of the traditional social order before it was too late. Underscoring this urgency Srinivas wrote 'We have, at the most, another ten years in which to record facts about a type of society which is changing fundamentally and with great rapidity' (Srinivas, 1955: 99)

3.6 General Features of the Village

Unlike the tribal communities, the Indian villages had a considerable degree of diversity. This diversity was both internal as well as external. The village was internally differentiated in diverse groupings and had a complex structure of social relationships and institutional arrangements. There were also different kinds of villages in different parts of the country. Even within a particular region of the country, not all villages were alike.

The stereotypical image of the Indian village as a self-sufficient community

was contested by anthropological studies. Beteille, for example, argued ‘at least as far back in time as living memory went, there was no reason to believe that the village (he studied) was fully self-sufficient in the economic sphere (Beteille, 1996:136-7). Similarly Srinivas too contested the colonial notion of the Indian village being a completely self-sufficient republic. The village, he argued, ‘was always a part of a wider entity. (Srinivas, 1960:10).

However, despite this contention about the village having links with the outside world and explicating the diversities that marked the rural society of India, it was the ‘**unity**’ of the village that was underlined by most anthropologists. The fact that the village interacted with the outside world did not mean it did not have a design of its own or could not be studied as a representative unit of Indian social life. While villages had horizontal ties, it was the vertical ties within the village that governed much of the life of an average person in the village.

Village provided an important source of identity to its residents. Different scholars placed different emphasis on how significant the village identity was when compared to other sources of identification, such as those of caste, class or locality. Srinivas argued that individuals in his village had a sense of identification with their village and an insult to one’s village had to be avenged like an insult to oneself, one’s wife, or one’s family (Srinivas, 1976:270). Similarly, Dube argued that though Indian villages varied greatly in their internal structure and organisation, in their ethos and world-view, and in their life-ways and thought-ways, on account of variety of factors, village communities all over the Indian sub-continent had a number of common features. The village settlement, as a unit of social organisation, represented a kind of solidarity which was different from that of the kin, the caste, and the class. Each village was a distinct entity, had some individual mores and usages, and possessed a corporate unity. Different castes and communities inhabiting the village were integrated in its economic, social, and ritual pattern by ties of mutual and reciprocal obligations sanctioned and sustained by generally accepted conventions. Notwithstanding the existence of groups and factions inside the settlement, people of the village could, and did, face the outside world as an organised, compact whole (Dube,1960:202).

Reflection and Action 3.01

Read a sociologists study of an Indian village and then read a novel, such as, Shreelal Shukl’s ‘Ragdarbari’ in Hindi or R.K. Narian’s Malgudi Day’s in English.

Write down an essay on the depiction of an Indian village, as given by a sociologist and compare it with the account of an Indian village by a creative writer. Compare your essay with those of other students at your Study Centre.

It was W.H. Wiser who had initially, in his classic study of *The Hindu Jajmani System*, first published in 1936, had conceptualised the social relationships among caste groups in the Indian village in the framework of ‘**reciprocity**’. The framework of reciprocity implied that though village social organisation was hierarchical, it was the ‘interdependence’ among different caste groups that characterised the underlying spirit of the Indian village. Reciprocity implied, explicitly or implicitly, an exchange of equal services and non-exploitative relations. Mutual gratification was supposed to be the outcome of reciprocal exchange.

Each serves the other. Each in turn is master. Each in turn is servant (Wiser 1969:10).

Though the later studies were much more elaborate and contained long descriptions of different forms of social inequalities and differences in the rural society, many of them continued to use the framework of reciprocity particularly while conceptualising 'unity' of the village social life. However not everyone emphasised the unity of the village the way Srinivas and Dube or earlier Wiser did. Some of the anthropologists explicitly contested the unity thesis while others qualified their arguments by recognising the conflicts within the village and the ties that villagers had with the outside world. For instance, Paul Hiebert in his study of a south Indian village, although arguing that the caste system provided a source of stability to the village, also underlined the fact that 'deep seated cleavages underlie the apparent unity of the village and fragmented it into numerous social groups' (Hiebert, 1971:13). Similarly, Beteille had argued that his study of village 'Sripuram as a whole constituted a unit in a physical sense and, to a much lesser extent, in the social sense'(Beteille, 1996:39).

Among those who nearly rejected the idea of the communitarian unity were Lewis and Bailey. F.G. Bailey, for example provided a radical critique of the 'unity-reciprocity' thesis and offered an alternative perspective. Stressing on the coercive aspects of caste relations, he writes:

... those who find the caste system to their taste have exaggerated the harmony with which the system works, by stressing the degree of interdependence between the different castes. Interdependence means that everyone depends on everyone else: it means reciprocity. From this it is easy to slip into ideas of equality: because men are equally dependent on one another, they are assumed to be equal in other ways. Equality of rank is so manifestly false when applied to a caste system that the final step in the argument is seldom taken, and exposition rests upon a representation of mutual interdependence, and the hint that, because one caste could bring the system to a standstill by refusing to play its part, castes do not in fact use this sanction to maintain their rights against the rest. In fact, of course, the system is held together not so much by ties of reciprocity, but by the concentration in one of its parts. The system works the way it does because the coercive sanctions are all in the hands of a dominant caste. There is a tie of reciprocity, but it is not a sanction of which the dependent castes can make easy use (Bailey, 1960:258).

However, this kind of a perspective did not become popular among the sociologist anthropologists during 1950s and 1960s. They continued to work largely within the 'unity-reciprocity' framework, with varied degrees of emphasis.

3.7 Social Structure of the Village: Caste, Class and Gender

The intellectual and historical contexts in which social anthropologists worked largely guided the kinds of research questions they identified for their studies. The tradition of studying tribal communities that emphasised a 'holistic' perspective also had its influence on the way village was visualised.

Despite their primary preoccupation with kinship, religion and ritual life of

the 'little communities', documenting their internal structures and village social life could not be completed without looking at the prevailing social differences. Theoretically also the emphasis on 'unity' did not mean absence of differences and social inequality. Neither did it mean that these questions were not important for social anthropology. Though not all of them began their work with a direct focus on understanding the structures of inequalities, almost every one of them offered detailed descriptions of the prevailing differences of caste, class and gender in the village social life. Being rich in empirical description, one can construct a picture of the social relations, which may not necessarily fit within the framework with which these studies were actually carried out.

i) The Caste System

Caste and hierarchy have long been seen as the distinctive and defining features of the Indian society. It was during the colonial period that caste was, for the first time, theorised in modern sociological language. The colonial administrators also gathered extensive ethnographic details and wrote detailed accounts of the way systems of caste distinctions and hierarchies worked in different parts of the sub-continent. Social anthropology in the post-independence India continued with a similar approach that saw caste as the most important and distinctive feature of Indian society. While caste was a concrete structure that guided social relationships in the Indian village, **hierarchy** was its ideology.

An individual in caste society lived in a hierarchical world. Not only were the people divided into higher or lower groups, their food, their dresses, ornaments, customs and manners were all ranked in an order of hierarchy. Anthropologist invariably invoked the **varna system of hierarchy** which divided the Hindu society into five major categories. The first three, viz., Brahmins (the priests or men of learning), Kshatriyas (rulers and warriors) and Vaishyas (traders) were regarded as *dvijas* or the twice born. The fourth category was that of Shudras, composed of numerous occupational castes that were regarded as relatively 'clean' and were not classed as "untouchables". In the fifth major category were placed all the "untouchable" castes. Hindus all over India, according to Dube, accepted this classification.

The legitimate occupations to be followed by people in these major categories (*varnas*) were defined by tradition. Within each category there were several sub-groups (*jati* or castes), which could be arranged in a hierarchical order within them. In this general framework of the varna system, with considerable variations in different regions there were several socially autonomous castes, each fitting into one of the five major divisions but otherwise being practically independent in their socio-religious sphere of life (Dube 1955: 35-36). Though the essence of caste lay in 'the arrangement of hereditary groups in a hierarchy', the popular impression derived from the idea of *varna* that arranged groups in an order with Brahmins at the top and Harijans at the bottom was right only partly. The empirical studies pointed out that 'in fact only the two opposite ends of the hierarchy were relatively fixed; in between, and especially in the middle region, there was considerable room for debate regarding mutual position' (Srinivas, 1994:5).

Caste divisions determined and decided all social relations. Most scholars saw caste as a **closed system** where 'entry into a social status was a function of heredity and individual achievement, personal quality or wealth had,

according to the strict traditional prescription, no say in determining the social status' (Majumdar, 1958:19). However, there were some who admitted that the way caste operated at the local level was 'radically different from that expressed in the varna scheme. Mutual rank was uncertain and this stemmed from the fact that mobility was possible in caste' (Srinivas, 1976:175).

Dube identified six factors that contributed towards the status differentiation in the village community of Shamirpet: religion and caste; landownership; wealth; position in government service and village organisation; age; and distinctive personality traits (Dube, 1955:161). Attempts to claim a higher ritual status through, what Srinivas called **sanskritisation**, was not a simple process. It could not be achieved only through rituals and life-style imitation. The group had to also negotiate it at the local power structure. Similarly, stressing secular factors, Dube pointed to the manner in which the caste panchayat of the lower or the menial castes worked as unions to secure their employment and strengthen their bargaining power vis-à-vis the land owning dominant castes.

However, a large majority of them viewed caste system as working within the framework of jajmani system and bound together different castes living in the village or a cluster of villages in enduring and pervasive relationships.

Reflection and Action 3.02

You just read about the sociologists' opinion about caste in India based on their own studies/field-work. As a person you may have come across caste as a social reality. Think about your own experiences and write a report on 'Caste in India' in about two pages.

Discuss your report with other students of sociology at your Study Centre, as well as, your Academic Counsellor.

ii) Land and Class

As is evident from the above discussion, the social anthropologists studying India during the fifties and sixties generally worked in the framework of caste. The manner in which social science disciplines developed in India, **class and land** came to be seen as the concerns of economists. However, since anthropologists advocated a perspective that studied "small communities" in holistic terms, agriculture and the social relations of production on land also found a place in the village monographs.

While some of them directly focused on economic life as one of the central research questions, most saw it as an aspect of the caste and occupational structure of the village. Land relations to them reflected the same patterns of hierarchy as those present in the caste system. 'There was a certain amount of overlap between the twin hierarchies of caste and land. The richer landowners generally came from such high castes as Brahmins, and Lingayats while the Harijans contributed a substantial number of landless labourers. In contrast to the wealthier household, the poor one was almost invisible (Srinivas, 1976:169).

Some others underlined the primacy of land over all other factors in determining social hierarchy in the village. Comparing a Brahmin dominated village with a Jat dominated village, Lewis argued that 'While the landowners are generally of higher caste in Indian villages, it is their position as landowners,

rather than caste membership *per se*, which gives them status and power' (Lewis, 1958:81). However, despite such references to the crucial significance of land ownership in village social life, village studies did not explore the details of agrarian social structures in different regions of the country. Caste, family, kinship and religion remained their primary focus.

iii) Gender Differences

It is rather interesting to note that although 'gender' as a conceptual category had not yet been introduced in the social sciences when the social anthropologists were doing their field studies during 1950s and 1960s, village studies were not completely "gender blind". Since the concept of gender and the accompanying theoretical issues had yet to be articulated, the social anthropologists did not look at man-woman relations in the manner in which it was to be conceptualised and studied later. Still, many of the village monographs provide detailed accounts of the patterns of social relations between men and women in the rural society of India. Some of these monographs even have separate chapters devoted to the subject.

In the absence of a critical theoretical perspective, the village studies constructed gender and patriarchy as a 'natural social order'. Further, accounts of man-woman relations provided in these studies were largely based on the data collected from male informants. Most of the anthropologists themselves being males, it would have been difficult for them to be able to meet and participate in the "private" life of the village people. Some of them were quite aware of this lacuna in their fieldwork and have written about it in their reflections on their fieldwork experience.

Most village studies looked at gender relations within the framework of the household, and participation of women in work. These studies highlighted the division of labour within the family and the overall dominance that men enjoyed in the public sphere. Women, particularly among the upper castes, were confined within the four walls of the house. 'The social world of the woman was synonymous with the household and kinship group while the men inhabited a more heterogeneous world' (Srinivas, 1976:137). Compared to men in the Central Indian village studied by Mayer 'women had less chance to meet people from other parts of the village. The village well provided a meeting place for all women of non-Harijan castes, and the opportunity for gossip. But there was a limit to the time that busy women could stand and talk while they drew their water and afterwards they must return home, where the occasions for talking to people outside their own household were limited to meeting with other women of the street' (Mayer, 1960:136). In the Telangana village also, Dube observed that women were secluded from the activities of the public space. 'It was considered a mark of respectability in women if they walked with their eyes downcast' (Dube, 1955:18).

The rules of patriarchy were clearly laid out. After caste, gender was the most important factor that governed the division of labour in the village. Masculine and feminine pursuits were clearly distinguished (Dube, 1955:169). Writing on similar lines about his village in the same region, Srinivas pointed out that the two sets of occupations were not only separated but also seen as unequal. 'It was the man who exercised control over the domestic economy. He made the annual grain-payments at harvest to the members of the artisan and servicing castes who had worked for him during the year. The dominant

‘male view’ thought of women as being ‘incapable of understanding what went on outside the domestic wall’ (Srinivas, 1976:140-1).

Men also had a near complete control over women’s sexuality. In the monogamous family, popular among most groups in India, ‘a man could play around but not so a woman. A man’s sense of private property in his wife’s genital organs was as profound as in his ancestral land. And just as, traditionally, a wife lacked any right to land she lacked an exclusive right to her husband’s sexual prowess. Polygyny and concubinage were both evidence of her lack of such rights. Men and women were separate and unequal (*ibid*, 155).

Patriarchy and male dominance were legitimate norms. ‘According to the traditional norms of the society a husband is expected to be an authoritative figure whose will should always dominate the domestic scene. As the head of the household he should demand respect and obedience from his wife and children. The wife should regard him as her ‘master’ and should ‘serve him faithfully’ (Dube, 1955:141).

Box 3.03: Village under Duress

Not every thinker, sociologist or anthropologist agrees with the general opinion of village India as an idyllic social reality. Infact, sociologist like Dipankar Gupta begs to differ. He says that — “The village is shrinking as a sociological reality, though it still exists as space. Nowhere else does one find the level of hopeless disenchantment as one does in the rural regions of India. In urban slums there is squalour, there is filth and crime, but there is hope and the excitement that tomorrow might be quite different from today.

Rarely would a villager today want to be a farmer if given an opportunity elsewhere. Indeed, there are few rural institutions that have not been mauled severely from within. The joint family is disappearing, the rural caste hierarchy is losing its tenacity, and the much romanticised harmony of village life is now exposed for the sham it perhaps always was. **If anything, it is perhaps B.R. Ambedkar’s analysis of the Indian village that strikes the truest of all. It was Ambedkar who said that the village was a cesspool of degradation, corruption and worse.** That village India was able to carry on in spite of all this in the past was because there was little option for most people, rich or poor outside the confines of the rural space. (Gupta, Dipankar, Whither the Indian Village, Culture and Agriculture in ‘Rural’ India, EPW Vol. XL No.8, Feb. 19-25, 2005, pp. 751-758)

3.8 ‘Field-View’ and the Fieldwork

More than anything else, it was the method of participant observation that distinguished the social anthropological village studies from the rural surveys that were conducted by economists and demographers. And it was this method of qualitative fieldwork that helped social anthropology gain a measure of respectability in the Indian academy.

The ‘field-view’ was a superior way of understanding contemporary Indian society as it provided a “corrective” to the “partial” ‘book-view’ of India constructed by Indologists from the classical Hindu texts. The ‘book-view’ was partial not only because it was based on texts written in “ancient times”, it was partial also because, the texts used by the Indologists were all written by the ‘elite’ upper caste Hindus.

In contrast, the anthropological perspective which used a “scientific method” of inquiry and provided a “holistic” picture of the way social life was organised in the Indian society at the level of its “grassroots”. Even though some of the scholars were themselves from India and therefore had pre-conceived notions about rural society, ‘a proper scientific training’ could take care of such biases.

However, despite this ‘self-image’ of a scientist and a repeated emphasis on “value-neutrality” towards the subjects being studied, a close reading of what these students of Indian village have written about their experiences of fieldwork provides a completely different picture. Apart from pointing to the kinds of problems they faced in getting information about the village social life from different sections of rural society, they give vivid descriptions of how their own location and social background influenced and conditioned their observations of the village society and their access to different sections of people in the rural society. The place they chose to live in the village during the field work, the friends they made for regular information, the social class they themselves came from, their gender, the caste status bestowed upon them by the village, all played important roles in the kind of data they could access.

The manner in which an individual anthropologist negotiated his/her relationship with the village determined who was going to be his/her informant. One of the first questions asked of a visitor was regarding his/her caste. Accordingly the village placed the visitor in its own structure and allocated him/her a place and status. The anthropologist was not only expected to respect this allocation of status bestowed on him/her by the village, but he was also asked to conform to the normative patterns of the caste society. The anthropologist could not avoid negotiating with the village social structure mainly because the method of participant observation required that he/she went and stayed in the village personally for a fairly long period of time. The routine way of developing contact with the village was through the village leaders or the head of the panchayat who invariably came from the dominant upper caste. Most of the anthropologists themselves being from upper caste and middle class background, it was easier for them to approach and develop rapport with these leaders. This also helped them execute their studies with lesser difficulties. Majumdar is explicit about this:

The ex-zamindar family provided accommodation and occasionally acted as the host, and this contact helped ... to work with understanding and confidence; little effort was needed to establish *rapport* (Majumdar, 1958:5).

However, finding a place to live was not merely a matter of convenience. It identified the investigator with certain groups in the village and this identification had its advantages as well as disadvantages. While it gave them access to the life ways of the upper castes, it also made them suspect in the eyes of the lower castes. Betelle, for example, was “permitted” to live in a Brahmin house in the *agraharam* (the Brahmin locality), ‘a privilege’, he was told, ‘never extended to an outsider and a non-Brahmin before’. His acceptance in the *agraharam* as a co-resident was not without any conditions. I could live in the *agraharam* only on certain terms, by accepting some of the duties and obligations of a member of the community... The villagers of Sripuram had also assigned me a role, and they would consider it most unnatural if I decided suddenly to act in ways that were quite contrary to what was expected (Beteille, 1975:104).

Living in the *agraharam* also gave him an identity of a Brahmin in the village. “I was identified with Brahmins by my dress, my appearance, and the fact that I lived in one of their houses”(*ibid*:9). For the Non-Brahmins and Adi-Dravidas, he was just another Brahmin from North India. This meant that his “access to these groups was therefore, far more limited than to the Brahmins”(*ibid*:9). His visits to the Harijan locality received loud disapproval from his Brahmin hosts and he was also suspected by the Harijans, who ‘regard a visit to their homes by a Brahmin as unnatural, and some believe that it brings then ill luck’(*ibid*:278).

The village was not only caste conscious, it was also class and gender conscious. As Beteille writes:

If I asked the tenant questions about tenancy in the presence of the landlord, he did not always feel free to speak frankly. If I arranged to meet the tenant separately to ask these questions, the landlord felt suspicious and displeased (*ibid*:284).

Underlining the role gender played in “fieldwork”, Leela Dube, one of the few Indian women anthropologists who worked in a village writes, “I was a Brahmin and a woman, and this the village people could never forget” (Dube, 1975:165).

Srinivas tells us a similar story about his experiences in the field. Since his family originally came from the region where he did his field study, it was easier for his villagers to place him. For the villagers he ‘was primarily a Brahmin whose joint family owned land in a neighbouring village’ (Srinivas, 1976:33). The older villagers gave him the role of a Brahmin and a landowner. By so doing they were able to make him behave towards them in certain predictable ways, and they in turn were able to regulate their behaviour towards him.

More significant here perhaps is the fact that he very consciously conformed to the normative patterns and the local values as he came to understand them.

It did not even occur to me to do anything which might get me into trouble with the village establishment. I accepted the limitations and tried to work within them (*ibid*:47 emphasis added).

A similar kind of anxiety is expressed by Leela Dube when she writes:

if I had to gain a measure of acceptance in the community, I must follow the norms of behaviour which the people associated with my sex, age, and caste (Dube,1975:165).

This conformist attitude towards the village social structure and its normative patterns as received through the dominant sections had such an important effect on their fieldwork that some of them quite consciously chose not to spend much time with the “low” caste groups. Srinivas, for example, admits that while he was collecting genealogies and a household census, he ‘deliberately excluded the Harijan ward’. He thought that he ‘should approach the Harijans only through the headman’. The consequence was that his account of the village was biased in favour of the upper caste Hindus. It was not merely the “insider” Indian scholars who, while doing “participant observation”, had to negotiate with the social structure of the village, even the scholars from the West had to come to terms with the statuses that the

village gave them and which caste groups they would get more closely identified with. The British scholar, Adrian Mayer, who studied a Central Indian village writes that it was impossible for him merely to “observe” the caste system. He had to participate in it, merely by the fact of my living in Ramkheri. He was accorded the status of ‘an undesignated upper caste’ and by the time he left the village he was most closely identified with Rajputs, the locally dominant caste (Mayer 1975).

Though the village social structure invariably imposed itself upon the “participant observer”, it was not completely impossible to work without being identified with one of the dominant castes. There were some who made concerted efforts to understand what the caste system meant to those who were at its receiving end. It is not surprising that the image of hierarchy as it appeared from the bottom up was very different from its “mainstream” constructions. Mencher, who chose deliberately to spend more time among the “Harijans” writes:

...most of the Harijans I got to know tended to describe their relations with higher-caste people in terms of power, both economic (in terms of who employed whom, or their dependence on the landed for employment) and political (in terms of authority and the ability to punish).

For Harijans both old and young, the exploitative aspect of hierarchy was what seemed most relevant, not the “to each his own” aspect....To them it was all quite clearly a system in which some people worked harder than others, and in which those who were rich and powerful remained so, and obviously had no intention of relinquishing their prerogative voluntarily (Mencher, 1975:119 and 127).

However, apart from a few exceptions of those doing agrarian studies (Mencher,1978; Djurfeldt and Lindberg,1975; Harriss;1982), it was only later when the Dalit movement consolidated itself in different parts of the country, that social anthropologists and sociologists began to examine the question of power and politics of caste relations.

3.9 Conclusion

The studies of Indian villages carried-out by social anthropologists during the 1950s and 1960s were undoubtedly an important landmark in the history of Indian social sciences. Even though the primary focus of these studies was on the social and ritual life of the village people, there are enough references that can be useful pointers towards an understanding of the political and economic life in the rural society of India during the first two decades of independent India.

More importantly, these studies helped in contesting the dominant stereotype of the Indian village made popular by the colonial administrators. The detailed descriptive accounts of village life constructed after prolonged field-works carried out, in most cases, entirely by the anthropologists themselves convincingly proved how Indian villages were not ‘isolated communities’. Village studies showed that India’s villages had been well integrated into the broader economy and society of the region even before the colonial rule introduced new agrarian legislation. They also pointed to the regional differences in the way social village life was organised in different parts of the country.

Social anthropological studies also offered an alternative to the dominant “book-view” of India constructed by Indologists and orientalists from the Hindu scriptures. The “field-view” presented in the village monographs not only contested the assumptions of Indology but also convincingly showed with the help of empirical data as to how the idealised model of the varna system as theorised in Hindu scriptures did not match with the concrete realities of village life. While caste was an important institution in the Indian village and most studies foregrounded caste differences over other differences, empirical studies showed that it was not a completely closed and rigidly defined system. Caste statuses were also not exclusively determined by one’s position in the ritual hierarchy and that there were many grey and contestable areas within the system. It was from the village studies that the concepts like sanskritisation, dominant caste, segmental structures, harmonic and disharmonic systems emerged.

However, village studies were also constrained by a number of factors. The method of participant observation that was the main strength of these studies also imposed certain limitations on the fieldworkers, which eventually proved critical in shaping the image they produced of the Indian village. Doing participant observation required a measure of acceptability of the field worker in the village that he/she chose to study. In a differentiated social context, it was obviously easy to approach the village through the dominant sections. However, this choice proved to be of more than just a strategic value. The anxiety of the anthropologist to get accepted in the village as a member of the “community” made their accounts of the village life conservative in orientation.

It also limited their access to the dominant groups in the local society. They chose to avoid asking all those questions or approaching those subordinate groups, which they thought, could offend the dominant interests in the village. The choices made by individual anthropologists as regard to how they were going to negotiate their own relationship with the village significantly influenced the kind of data they could gather about village life. Unlike the “tribal communities”, the conventional subject matter of social anthropology, Indian villages were not only internally differentiated much more than the tribes, they also had well articulated world views. Different sections of the village society had different perspectives on what the village was. Though most of the anthropologists were aware of this, they did not do much to resolve this problem. On the contrary, most of them consciously chose to identify themselves with the dominant caste groups in the village, which apart from making their stay in the village relatively easy, limited their access to the world-view of the upper castes and made them suspect among the lower castes.

Apart from the method of participant observation and the anxiety about being accepted in rural society that made the anthropologists produce a conservative account of the rural social relations, the received theoretical perspectives and the professional traditions dominant within the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology during the time of village studies also had their influences on these scholars. Anthropologist during the decades of fifties and sixties generally focussed on the structures rather than changes. This preoccupation made them look for the sources that reproduced social order in the village and to ignore conflict and the possible sources of social transformation.

3.10 Further Reading

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Unit 5

Brahminical Perspective

Contents

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Varna-Jati Theory
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- 5.6 Conclusion
- 5.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the position of Brahmins in society
- explain the Brahminical interpretation of the caste system
- discuss the pattern of interaction between Brahmins and people of other castes.

5.1 Introduction

In the previous unit you learnt about the colonial Perspective on Caste. This unit seeks to explain the viewpoint of Brahmins on the caste system. The Brahmins being experts in conducting and interpreting rituals laid out in the sacred texts emphasised the scriptural and ritual aspects of caste. They quoted chapters and verses from the scriptures and in doing so justified the caste system and their own position in it to a large extent. Interestingly, Brahmins were conversant with Sanskrit language, which is regarded as ‘Deva bhasha’, or the language of the gods. It is also the language in which incantations in rituals are made. Agreeably, Brahmins who are fluent in the language of the gods treat themselves as superior to the rest of the people. This consolidates their position in society a great deal.

Since the lifestyle and the world-view of the Brahmins including their ideas about the caste system are derived from the scriptures, the Brahminical perspective on caste is, in essence, based on the scriptural dictates and their articulation in the lives of Brahmins¹. We begin the unit with the traditional theory of the origin of Brahmins and their essential attributes in the larger framework of varna and the jati. Subsequently, we discuss the principle of purity-pollution, which forms the basis of interaction between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, and then go on to exploring the inter-dependence of Brahmins and members of other castes in society, which is guided by their occupational specialisation.

5.2 Varna-Jati Theory

The term ‘varna’ means colour. In the religious texts, the concept of varna is used for grading people. *Rigveda* bears reference to the Arya varna comprising the Aryan people (who were of light complexion) which has been contrasted with the Dasa varna comprising the non-Aryan people (who were of dark complexion). What the *Rigveda* does mention, however, are four

orders in society, Brahma enfolding the priests, Kshatra enfolding the warriors, and Visha enfolding the common people. Ghurye (1950:46) writes, ‘These classes or orders are regularly referred to in later literature as varnas, so much so that popularly Hindu religion has come to be defined as ‘Varnashrama Dharma’. Yet in the *Rigveda* the word ‘varna’ is never applied to any of these classes. It is only the Arya varna, or the Aryan People, that is contrasted with the Dasa varna. The *Shatapatha Brahmana*, on the other hand, describes the four classes as the four varnas. ‘Varna’ means colour, and it was in this sense that the word seems to have been employed in contrasting the Arya and the Dasa, referring to their fair and dark colours respectively. The colour-connotation of the word was so strong that later on when the classes came to be regularly described as varnas, four different colours were assigned to the four classes, by which their members were supposed to be distinguished.’ In later literature, these orders are referred to as varnas.

One of the later hymns better known as the ‘Purushasukta’, established that there are four orders in society and that each order has emerged from particular body part of the Purusha — the primeval man as described in the previous unit also. These varnas are, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. It is said that they have emerged from mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of the Purusha. Following the varna scheme, there are only four orders into which people are divided. In addition to the varnas, the vedic literature mentions groups such as Ayogava, Chandala, Nishada, and Paulkasa who lay outside the varna scheme. They were required to perform ‘unclean’ tasks such as scavenging, were despised and treated as untouchables.

In the *Mahabharata*², each varna is associated with a particular colour, Brahmin with white, Kshatriya with red, Vaishya with yellow, and Shudra with black. It was believed that each varna could maintain its purity and its colour by avoiding marriages between people belonging to different varnas. Interestingly, the people of the varna, which was able to retain its purity and colour, gained precedence on the social scale. Largely Brahmins refrained from marrying outside their varna so they were able to maintain their colour and purity. While it may be accepted that normatively the Brahmins did avoid marrying outside their varna, there is no denying that such marriages and/or associations did take place, though infrequently. The considerations of purity of blood and colour were set-aside on some occasions. The case of Satyakam Jabala (son of a maid servant who could not tell the name of the man from whom she conceived him), Visvamitra (of unknown parentage) loom large in the sacred texts. Furthermore, Ghurye’s analysis of anthropometric data (1961) suggests that Brahmins of Uttar Pradesh bear close physical affinity with Churas of the Shudra varna and the Khatris of the Vaishya varna in Punjab.

The division into varnas applies, in addition to people, to planets, even soil. This means that planets, soil are distinguished into four varnas. In the words of Bose (1932:11) “Soils can be recognised by means of certain indications. The Brahman [Brahmin] soil is white in colour. It smells like clarified butter and is astringent to the taste. The Kshatriya soil is blood red in colour, smells like blood and is bitter to taste. The Vichy soil is yellow in colour, smells like alkaline earth and is sour to the taste. The Shudra soil is black in colour,....and has the taste like that of wine.” Equally important to note is the classification of people in Indian astrology according to which every person, apart from the varna into which he/she is born, has a varna which is determined by the *rashi* or the sign of the zodiac at the time of birth. It is possible that a

person born into a Brahmin varna has a Vaishya or Shudra varna according to the sign of the zodiac at the time of birth. The varna ascribed by virtue of birth under a particular sign of the zodiac is important in identifying his/her *gunas* (elements or features of quality). In common parlance and in mundane social contexts, the varna of a person refers to the one he/she acquires because of birth and not the sign of the zodiac (See Saraswati, 1977).

Basically there are three *gunas*, *sattva guna* (associated with brightness, intelligence), *rajo guna* (associated with energy, rigorous activity), and *tamo guna* (associated with darkness and inactivity). It is believed that these *gunas* combine different proportions, which brings about variation in behaviour of people. It is stated in the *Gita* that the four varnas were created on the basis of the *gunas* in the sense that *sattva guna* enjoining serenity of mind, self control, forbearance, wisdom, and aptitude for acquiring spiritual knowledge are the attributes of the Brahmins; *rajo guna* enjoining bravery, fury, steadiness, and inclination for acquiring kingship are the attributes of the Kshatriyas; skill to till the land, maintain herds of cattle and other animals for sustenance, trade and commerce are the attributes of the Vaishyas; and *tamo guna* enjoining aptitude for serving others, performing manual work are the attributes of the Shudras (Kane, 1962). These also define the duties ascribed to the people of the four varnas in the scriptures. More clearly stated, the Brahmins are ordained to master the sacred texts. According to the *Vishnumriti* (2-1.17), 'A Brahmin teaches the Veda....A Brahmin sacrifices for others, and receives alms....' The Kshatriyas are ordained to fight in wars and battles and to protect the people of other varnas from enemies. They could also perform administrative and military services. The Vaishyas are ordained to make a living by engaging in trade and merchandise, cultivation of land and breeding of cattle. The Shudras are ordained to serve the people of other castes with modesty and humility. . It is commonly held that *dharma* or righteous action is one, which is in line with the caste rules. Apart from these norms, Manu prescribed activities that people of different varnas could take up in times of crisis. He laid out the following, work for wages, service, rearing cattle, seeking alms, receiving interest on money, among others, as activities that could be undertaken by people of all varnas for subsistence in difficult times. The laws of Manu enshrined in the *Manusmriti* mention that failure of the observance of caste rules leads to dire consequences. Those who digress from the sacred code were relegated a lower position in the social order. The injunctions were more impinging on Brahmins who set standards for others to follow and who sat in judgment over others' performance in society. Notwithstanding the prescriptions in the sacred texts, the laws for adopting an occupation were not always adhered to strictly even by the Brahmins. Instances of departure from the code laid down by Manu are found in the early Buddhist literature. Following the *Brahmopattimartanda*, there are at least six kinds of degraded Brahmins on the basis of undertaking occupations other than those laid out by Manu, rendering service to the king as personal servants, engaging in trade and selling, making sacrifices for others because of greed for money, acting as priests of the entire village, serving as cooks, and refraining from their daily sacrifice. These Brahmins are like Shudras (see Saraswati, 1977).

A Brahmin has the ritual power to ensure the safety of the king through his prayers, offerings and rituals that appease the deities. It is believed that the deities do not accept the offerings from a king till a Brahmin priest mediates the rituals that accompany them. An enraged Brahmin can curse kings and their subjects. There is widespread fear that a Brahmin's curse will come true.

Box 5.1: Position of the Brahmin and the King

‘At times the king is above the Brahman, as for example in the royal consecration ceremony. At other times the Brahman appears to be superior to the king, as for example in the *Manavadharmasastra*, and in passages from the *Mahabharata*. This conundrum is often addressed in terms of the postulation of two levels of truth, a higher level at which the Brahman is clearly pre-eminent, the source of everything else, and a lower level at which kings must protect and sponsor Brahmans in order for them to exist, as gods, on earth’ (cited from Dirks, 1990 :59).

The position of the Brahmin stood out in sharp contrast to that of an untouchable. Now, while the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas like the Brahmins could read the Vedas or hear readings from them, these were required to be taught and explained to them by a spiritual preceptor. The untouchables, on the other hand, were not allowed to hear the Vedas. The Vedas mention that molten lead should be poured into the ears of the untouchables who listen to readings or chanting from them. While the Brahmin was revered, the untouchable was looked down upon and treated with disgust. The untouchables remained marginalized in society to the extent that access to temples, water sources, and other places of social interface with the twice born were denied to them. They were forced to maintain physical and social distance from the rest of the people. They would not be allowed to enter the premises of the twice born. The Brahmins in Tamil Nadu lived in distinct areas called the *agraharams*. They confined most of their activities within the *agraharam*. Surely the non Brahmins, particularly untouchables were not allowed to enter it except for scavenging for which they were instructed to use the back lanes and in a way that they were not seen, neither did their shadow fall on a Brahmin. Untouchables could not wear footwear or keep moustache. If they did grow moustache, they could not twirl them up. The women were not allowed to wear the upper garment. In addition, untouchables were not heard on important matters that concerned everybody in the village including them. They had no say in decisions taken neither about their own affairs nor on issues that were of pertinence to them directly.

Dumont (1988:67) explains, ‘The set of four varnas divides into two: the last category of Shudras, is opposed to the block of the first three, whose members are ‘twice- born’ in the sense that they participate in initiation, second birth, and in the religious life in general. These twice-born, in turn divide into two: the Vaishyas are opposed to the block formed by the Kshatriyas and the Brahmanas, which in turn divides into two.’ Here, the second birth (first birth being that from the mother’s womb) implied in the expression ‘twice-born’ refers to the initiation ceremony in which men wear the sacred thread for the first time over the left shoulder and across the body. This symbolises the second, and spiritual birth of a person and qualifies him to perform certain rituals, recite certain *mantras* (sacred incantations). The Tamil Brahmin boys, for instance, are encouraged to recite the gayatri mantra (verse invoking the sun god) only after they have undergone the sacred thread ceremony.

In the Pali texts the word, ‘jati’ is used for caste. It may be noted that the word does not appear in vedic literature. In the *Katyayana Srautasutra* it is used for family. It occurs in the *Nirukta* (X11.13) and in Panini (V.4.9) who explains *brahmanjati* as meaning one who is a Brahmin by caste (see

Kane, 1962:1633). Saraswati writes (1977:18), ‘Though some authorities (for instance, Yajñavalkya) have clearly pointed out the difference between *jati* and *varna*, many others have used these words synonymously. Manu (X.31) used the word *varna* for mixed castes, and, often conversely, *jati* for *varna* (V11.177, IX.85-6)’. Manu propounded that children inherit character –types from their parents and that a person adopts the occupation for which he is temperamentally equipped by heredity. Jatis are, in essence, groups sharing an occupation (see Bose 1962). Manu has laid down detailed rules of hypergamous (*anuloma*) marriages and hypogamous (*pratiloma*) marriages. The laws of Manu prescribe that children born out of parents belonging to the same *varna* are *savarna* meaning ‘same *varna*’ while those born out of parents belonging to different *varnas* are *golaka*. When people belonging to a *varna* marry those belonging to a higher one repeatedly over five or seven generations only then their *varna* gets upgraded which means that they are treated as belonging to the higher one. Further, Manu states that jatis originate because of mixed marriages i.e. between people belonging to different *varnas*. Saraswati (1977:21) states, ‘The following law operates consistently in the case of jatis : the children begotten from wedded wives equal in *jati* belong to the *jati* of their fathers, but if the mothers are *bijati* (not of the same *jati*) then children born of such union are called *apasad* (base born) and placed under a *jati* which is neither of their fathers nor of their mothers. This is how the various *jatis* have sprung up.’ It may be mentioned, however, that children born out of *niyoga* (union for the sake of begetting children) inherit the *varna* of their mothers and not the biological fathers. Several Brahmin jatis are believed to have been the descendants of sons born out of the mind or the intellectual prowess of the gods. These are the *manasputras*—*manas* means mind and *putra* means son. There are others that have descended from sons born from the body fluids of the gods. There are yet others that have descended from sons born from wedlock and by natural birth. Such births are, however, mediated by divine intervention (see the *Brahmnopattimartanda* for details).

Brahmins are believed to have descended from a sage or seer after whom their *gotra* (an exogamous division the members of which are believed to have agnatically descended from a common ancestor) is named. It is commonly believed that the Brahmins of an earlier generation, like the sages who were their ancestors, were often endowed with *brahmatejas*, a quality which gave to their appearance of a particular glow and serenity (see Beteille, 1996:48).

5.3 The Ideology of Purity-Impurity

The ideology of purity – pollution regulates relationship between different castes significantly. It also provides a basis of hierarchy of castes. Thus, more pure a caste is, the higher is its place in the social hierarchy. The Sanskrit word for purity is *sodhana*. It is derived from the root, *sudh* meaning ‘pure’. The cognate of *sudh* is *saucha* meaning cleanliness. The Hindu scriptures lay down several means for attaining purity. Spiritual purity comes from studying the Vedas and other sacred texts; meditating on a deity; undertaking pilgrimages; repeating the name of god; practicing continence (*brahmacharya*), asceticism (*tapas*), non-violence (*ahimsa*); and avoiding food (such as onion, garlic, non-vegetarian food) that raise anger, lust, and passions. (see Walker, 1983).

When purity is lost or contaminated (because of, for example, infringement

of some critical caste rules as of a Brahmin who touches an untouchable by accident, or because of birth or death in the family, or any other reason), purification through performance of specific rituals is necessitated. Dumont (1970) situates the contrast between Brahmins and untouchables in the opposition between purity and impurity. For him, the opposition of pure and impure lies at the very root of hierarchy to an extent that it merges with the opposition of superior and inferior. He suggests that specialisation in impure tasks in practice or in theory leads to the attribution of permanent impurity to certain categories of people such as the untouchables. The untouchables regularly perform unclean tasks (such as scavenging, washing dirty linen, disposing dead animals and human bodies, making shoes). One example is that of the washermen who, in most parts of the country, clean the soiled linen at the time of birth and menstruation. The other example is that of cobblers who have to use leather (which is an impure material) for making or repairing footwear. Since these are the traditional tasks of the untouchables, they remain perpetually impure. This is permanent impurity. The impurity is contagious in the sense that it gets transmitted to those who touch or are touched by them. The defilement is corrected after performing a prescribed set of rituals. On the other hand, Manu has identified bodily secretions such as excrements, semen, saliva as impure and their presence on the body makes a person impure. In addition, some events as those of birth and death, menstruation, are considered to 'harbour a danger which lends to the temporary seclusion of the affected persons, to prohibitions against contact etc. A person's closest kin often becomes impure, therefore, untouchable for a specific period of time. Touching a menstruating woman or one who is observing taboos after child-birth or a man who has returned from the cremation ground after lighting a funeral pyre all impart temporary impurity. This is temporary impurity. Water is a purificatory agent; bath in running water, better still in sacred water as of the Ganges is particularly efficacious in cleansing impurity.

In order that the Brahmin retain their purity, the untouchables and people of lower castes are believed to absorb the temporary impurity of the Brahmins by cleaning their premises, and their soiled clothes, and performing the tasks that are treated as unclean and impure by them and in the process, become impure themselves. In doing so they ensure that the Brahmins remain in a state to perform rituals and act as intermediaries between gods and people (see Basham, 1954, Hocart, 1950, Gould, 1958). In the broad sense, one of the factors identifying the purity of a caste is whether or not a Brahmin accepts drinking water from the hands of its members. Surely, there are local variations. Hutton (1983) cites the example of Brahmins in north India who take water poured into their own drinking vessels by men of Shudra who are regarded as relatively clean e.g. Barhai (carpenter), Nai (barber), Barbhuja (grain-parcher), Kahar (fisherman, well sinker, and grower of water-nut). Brahmins in south India are extremely particular in this regard. Like water, exchange of food and dining between castes is fraught with several regulations. The glance or the shadow of an untouchable on the cooking pot of a Brahmin is enough to throw away its contents. Interestingly, food cooked in water as by boiling known as *Kachha khana* is subject to more restrictions than *pakka khana* or food cooked in *ghee* or clarified butter. Just as the restrictions on water and food, those on smoking are observed too. At this juncture it may be mentioned that the material of which the cooking utensil is made is of much importance. Hutton (1983) records that the higher caste people does not use earthenware because it cannot be completely clean. Furthermore, pollution can be contracted through bodily contact too.

Orenstein (1965) explains that basically there are two types of pollution an individual may be subjected to, intransitive pollution, and transitive pollution. The intransitive pollution is one which is incurred when a birth or death occurs in the kin group of an individual. On such occasions, defilement is said to spread throughout the kin group. Importantly, kinship assumes importance here. Near relatives stay impure for a longer time than distant ones. What is interesting to note is the belief that the extent of intransitive pollution is proportionate to the level at which the varna is located. This means that higher the rank, lesser is the pollution. Thus a Brahmin gets less intensely polluted than the Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra. Similarly, a Kshatriya gets more polluted than a Brahmin but less polluted than the Vaishya or Shudra. Transitive pollution, on the other hand, is incurred by way of coming in contact with polluted material. It is of two kinds: external pollution and internal pollution. External pollution is that which is acquired by touch or contact with polluted material. It can be removed by cleansing of the polluted person or polluted object. A spoon touched by an untouchable for example, becomes polluted. This pollution can be removed by washing it thoroughly. Similarly, a person who becomes polluted when an untouchable touches him/her has to take a bath in order to remove the pollution and re-gain his/her purity. Internal pollution is that which is acquired when a person consumes polluted foodstuff, polluted water, or any other substance, which gets absorbed in the body.

The criterion of touch or contact as a means of contracting pollution is not as simple as it seems to be. The pertinent question here is, why a washerman is treated as impure and polluted when he goes to the house of a high caste man on the occasion of a marriage but not treated so when he comes to collect dirty cloth or to deliver clean ones. One of the plausible explanations is that he does not pollute the house when he comes to collect dirty clothes or deliver clean clothes because at that time he is an 'agent of purification' (Dumont, 1970). On other occasions as that of marriage he is not an agent of purification but a man belonging to an untouchable caste. So he is treated as impure.

If an untouchable pollutes an earthen pot of a person belonging to a higher caste, it has to be replaced. If the same person pollutes a bronze pot, it may be washed scrupulously and need not be replaced. Stevenson (1954) suggests that since the earthen pot is porous it is difficult to purify it by washing. Moreover, it comes cheap so may be replaced easily. The bronze pot, on the other hand, can be washed rigorously; is more expensive so cannot be replaced easily. The people of impure caste are said to pollute the premises of temples by their sheer presence. It is for this reason that they were forbidden to enter the temples and the residential areas of the upper caste people.

Radhakamal Mukerjee proposes the following degrees of social avoidance in ascending order: (1) against sitting on a common floor; (2) against interdining; (3) against admission in the kitchen; (4) against touching metal pots; (5) against touching earthen pots; (6) against mixing in social festivals; (7) against admittance in the interior of the house; (8) against any kind of physical contact' (cited from Murphy, 1953: 63-64). Hindu conception about purity pollution governing how people interact with and behave towards each other may be consolidated in the following ideas that have been widely drawn from Kolenda (1997).

i) Dietary and Marital Customs

According to Kolenda, one of the basic means of determining the place of a caste group in the ritual rank in its diet and marital customs. It has been found that vegetarianism characterises purer caste. A Brahmin is pure because he/she is a strict vegetarian. This does not, in any way, mean that there are pure castes comprising of those that are vegetarian and impure castes comprising of those that are non-vegetarian. It may be noted that Kolenda's ascription of vegetarianism to Brahmins does not apply universally, for there are fish and meat eating Brahmins in Bengal, Kashmir and in other parts of the country.

Stevenson (1954) identifies the dietary and marital customs as indicative of the ritual status of castes. There are degrees of impurity based on the kind of non-vegetarian food consumed by the people of different castes. It is especially defiling to eat pork and/or beef. He mentions that it is worst to eat beef followed by pork, mutton, chicken and eggs (in this sequence). So castes that eat pork are lower than those who eat mutton, and castes that eat mutton are lower than those who eat chicken. Vegetarian castes are more pure. The next in hierarchy are the castes that eat mutton, chicken and eggs followed by untouchables who eat all these in addition to pork sometimes beef.

So far as marital customs are concerned, high castes are associated with the practice of monogamy. This is particularly stringent for women. Divorce and remarriage, particularly widow re-marriage is not allowed. Men may, however, marry more than once, middle and lower castes are permissive of widow re-marriage. This is, however, not preferred because it lowers the rank of a caste.

ii) Inheritance of pollution

Lower castes are said to suffer from permanent impurity. All the members of a caste inherit the defilement. Stevenson (1954) explains that any waste product from the body is treated as impure; death makes the entire body waste and those who deal with these incur impurity. The barber who deals with hair and nail chippings both waste products of the body is impure. What makes him impure to further extent is his duty to wash the male corpse of his clients while his wife washes the female corpse before cremation. Similarly, the washerman washes dirty clothes, those soiled by bodily excretions; the sweeper removes faeces and filth; he eats from pots and other utensils that have been polluted because of birth or death in the family, he wears the clothes in which a man dies. In effect the barber, washerman, sweeper and other castes are treated as polluted because of the kind of material they handle. Pollution spreads through touch, which means that one who is polluted passes on the pollution to other persons when he/she touches them. This is most explicit when water and/or food are exchanged. A Brahmin, as mentioned earlier does not accept food or water from anyone belonging to a lower caste. He may accept food, which is coated with *ghee* or clarified butter from castes belonging to middle ranks; he may take raw ingredients from anyone because it is believed that fire would purify these in the process of cooking.

iii) Dividual- Particle Theory

Marriot and Inden based their understanding on Hindu writings — Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, classical books of moral and medical sciences, and late medieval moral code books of certain castes in Bengal. It is

believed that these writings reflect the Hindu native models and bespeak of the people's own view of a person as 'individual' which also implies indivisibility into separable portions.

Marriott and Inden (1977) explain the theory of pollution in terms of coded-substance, which is itself, made up of coded particles. These particles (consisting of saliva, sweat, bits and pieces of hair) get exchanged among people through food water etc., in the course of interpersonal interactions. Each *varna* is believed to have received a specific coded substance from the creator and it is only proper that the people maintain or else improve the code and not indulge in anything that would make it inferior. Each person gives off and also receives these coded particles in social interaction. Now, better-coded particles are received from gods and people of higher castes while worse coded particles are received from those belonging to castes lower than one's own. It is suggested that one may get better particles through right eating, right marriage, and other right exchanges and actions. These may get consolidated because the inferior particles are got rid off through excretion etc. Further, they propose that the particles of different kinds separate, combine, and re-combine in different permutations because of the heat in the body which is generated in the process of digestion, sexual intercourse etc. It is for this reason that hot bodily and nutritive substances need to be carefully managed when one is associated with serving or eating warm food. Marriot and Inden maintain that the coded substance may break up into particles that may combine and recombine with each other. This determines the degree of a person's pollution or purity, which suggests that the Hindu view of a person is one, that is dividual (meaning divisible into separable portions).

iv) Guna Theory

The Guna theory of pollution was proposed by Marvin Davis (1976) who was a student of Marriott and Inden. This theory was derived after interviewing the Hindus of West Bengal but it is also mentioned in the sacred books such as *Bhagavada Gita*, *Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana*, *Purushasukta* and the *Manva Dharamasastra*. According to this theory, the feminine principle called *prakriti* joins with the male matter called *purusha*. The union of *prakriti* and *purusha* forms three basic materials called *gunas*. The three *gunas* are *sattvaguna*, *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. The *sattvaguna* is a white substance, generates goodness and joy and inspires all noble virtues and action; *rajoguna* is red, 'produces egoism, selfishness, violence, jealousy, and ambition; *tamoguna* is black, engenders stupidity, laziness, fear, and all sorts of base behavior.' (Davis,1976:9). The *sattvaguna* may be treated as symbolic of purity while the *tamoguna* may be treated as symbolic of impurity. It is believed that all the *gunas* are present and well balanced in the body of the Brahma while one or the other *guna* predominates among the four *varnas*. The proportion of *guna* in each *varna* is maintained through the lifestyle, diet, marriage pattern or the inter caste relation. Vegetarian food builds up *sattvaguna*, non-vegetarian food builds up *rajoguna*, and beef, left over food, spoiled food, and alcohol build up *tamoguna*. It is believed that disproportionate admixture of the *tamoguna* with the *sattvaguna* or the *rajoguna* creates, what Stevenson referred to as 'permanent pollution.' Brahmins involved in reciting sacred chants, performing sacrifices, and preaching the scriptures largely have *sattvaguna*. Similarly, untouchables involved in the work of scavenging, tanning, and that which involves dealing with dirt and filth, animal hide, body excretions

largely have *tamoguna*, and Kshatriyas or Vaishyas who are involved in warfare, and activities that sustain life such as cultivation, herding, trading respectively, largely have *rajoguna*.

It may be understood that people of different *varnas* and *jatis* may improve their *guna* through diet, work, and performance of religious rituals, meditation and learning. Another way in which the *guna* may be improved is through marriage. In the words of Davis (1976:16), ‘Through activities in accord with *dharma* and through mixing one’s own physical nature with that of *sattvik* substances, for example, the defining features of a birth-group are transformed positively and its rank elevated; for in this way individuals of the group and the birth- group as a whole become more cognizant of Brahma and lead a more uplifting, spiritual life.’

5.4 Jajmani System

The mundane relationships between castes are governed by what is known as the ‘jajmani system which may be viewed from the standpoint of the day-to-day interactions through which economic values are economically expressed and economic behavior is invested with religious meaning’ (Gould, 1987:8). The Brahmin performs rituals on different occasions for people of other castes. In return, the Brahmin receives grain or service from those he has obliged. Now, while the rendition of ritual is from the Brahmins to the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras, the grain is dispensed in the opposite direction i.e. from the other *varnas* to the Brahmins.

Box 5.2: Alternative view-point on the Jajmani system

‘Fuller’s argument presumes, with Heesterman, Pocock, and Dumont, that the prestations made by the dominant cultivators were primarily matters of the ‘rights’ of the recipients, and not of the ritual functions carried out, through gift- giving, by these donors in their capacity as *jajmans*. More recently, Good (1982) has accepted Pocock’s reasons for denying the existence of a ‘jajmani system’, and goes on to argue that *jajman* and *jajmani* are Hindi terms whose equivalents in the other Indian languages, or at least in Tamil, are not much used and to speak therefore of a ‘jajmani system’ outside of the Hindi-speaking region is to impose an alien interpretation on the data’ (cited from Raheja, 1990:93).

In the jajmani system, the patron is addressed as ‘jajman’ while the render of the service is addressed as ‘kamin’. It is essential that both the Brahmin priest himself as also the place where he performs the service are pure or are purified before the ritual. This can happen when pollution that would otherwise defile a ritual is removed. The only way this is possible is by engaging specialists who perform such tasks as barbering, washing cloths, sweeping and mopping the floor. The pollution is removed or absorbed by those who perform such tasks.

For the kamin, as mentioned earlier, there are ‘payments in cash and kind made daily, monthly, biyearly, per piece work, and on special occasions, depending on the type of service rendered and in part on the good will of the jajman’ (Wiser, 1936: XXIV). A kamin may serve several twice born patrons within his village and/or those in neighbouring villages. Often his network with the patrons is used for negotiating marital relationships between them. In several villages, the marriage negotiations are conducted through the *nai* or the barber. He is required to find out the economic standing and resources

of the bride's family. Later, when the bride joins her husband after marriage, the barber's wife helps her in adjusting in the husband's house and dealing with his family members amicably.

Gould (1987) mentions that there are several reasons for expansion of jajmani relations beyond the confines of a village. The first reason is that an average village may not contain representatives of all the castes (specialising in different occupations) that participate in the jajmani system. It is, therefore, inevitable to draw the services of specialist(s) from adjoining village(s) when other caste members have not adopted the occupation. The second reason is the initiative of the specialists to expand their clientele with the purpose of raising their income. There is no restriction on the number or the location of clients a specialist may engage in. A specialist may engage with as many patrons as he is able to serve. The third reason is the dissatisfaction of the jajman. If a jajman is not satisfied with the service of the kamin, he may seek another one often from an adjoining hamlet or village. This is because the people of the caste to which the erring kamin belongs may not agree to serve the dissatisfied jajman because of casteist loyalty.

Three attributes of the jajmani system need elaboration. The first attribute of the jajmani system is functional interchangeability. Kolenda (1963) explains that functional interchangeability refers to a situation in which the occupation of a caste is adopted by another one when the specialist caste is absent. This may be explained with the following example. People belonging to the Chamar caste do sweeping. If there is nobody belonging to the Chamar caste in the village, then sweeping is done by people belonging to another caste. This may happen with other castes too. The second attribute of the jajmani system is its temporal continuity. A jajmani relationship lasts over generations. It is inherited from father to sons by both jajmans and kamins. When a joint family divides into nuclear ones, the clients are divided in the same manner as property. This implies that a kamin continues to serve the sons of an old man (who had been his jajman for several decades) even after they have separated and set up different households. Similarly, the sons of a kamin continue to serve the patrons of their father when he is no longer in a position to render service or after he dies. The third attribute of the jajmani system is the interchangeability between the roles of jajman and kamin. Some persons are both jajmans and kamins depending on the context. A person serves one or many jajman(s). An ironsmith, for example, may serve the Brahmin households as a kamin and himself may be a jajman to the washerman and the barber.

The jajmani system defines the basis for the exchange of services between different castes who specialise in different occupations³. In doing so it also lays out the pattern of interaction between the different castes. Now, the fundamental assumption here is that members of a particular caste specialise in a specific occupation inherited from their ancestors and which is sanctified in the sacred texts. Gupta (1984) explains that this does not always happen in reality. The sacred texts, however, make mention of only a limited number of *jatis*. The number of *jatis* that exists today far exceeds that mentioned in the sacred texts. What has happened is that there has been much diversification in the occupation of different castes. This means that people of a particular caste who were earlier engaged in only one occupation now specialise in more of them. Brahmins, for example, have taken to cultivation, warfare and even business. In the present day, the *jajmani* system is not operative in its full.

5.5 Emergent Concerns

What is important to note is the fact that the rigidity with which the upper caste people maintained casteist restrictions is on the decline due to several factors. Out of these, at least three seem to be particularly significant. One factor is the increase in mobility of people more so in public transport as trains, buses etc. in which people of several castes are compelled to travel together. Since defilement is so common in such situations that its removal is neither always possible nor convenient. The second factor is the spread of education which dispels superstitions and beliefs in unfounded explanations such as the one that the untouchables are impure by birth and therefore, need to be kept away from. The third factor is the initiatives taken by the government in overcoming untouchability. It is widely popularised that anybody found guilty of practicing untouchability is liable to be punished. Moreover, the government offers reservation in educational and vocational institutions as also jobs in the public sector. In addition, several NGOs are engaged in the endeavour of abolishing untouchability and all kinds of discrimination on the basis of caste. The chief concern is with strengthening the economic and social base of the lower caste people who have remained marginalised and Peripherised in society.

Interestingly, overthrowing the place assigned to them and the sanctions imposed on them in the sacred texts, the people—particularly those belonging to the lower castes aspire to acquire a place in the upper rungs of the caste hierarchy. In order to achieve this, they begin with adopting the customs and lifestyle of the upper castes. M.N. Srinivas coined the term ‘sanskritisation’ to explain this phenomenon. In the words of Srinivas (1952:32), ‘A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism and by sanskritising its ritual and pantheon. In short it takes over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of Brahmin and the adoption of Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though, theoretically forbidden. This process has been called ‘sanskritisation’...’ A jati sanskritising itself may begin to assert itself as a Brahmin, Kshatriya, or Vaishya over a span of one or two generations. While the lower caste people adopt the lifestyle and code of conduct of the upper caste people, the upper caste people themselves are tremendously influenced by Western thought and Western way of life. This is explained as the process of westernisation.

Joan Mencher (1974) brought out the viewpoint of the lower caste people on the caste system and said that, (i) the caste system does not merely provide every caste with special privileges, rather it leads to and strengthens economic exploitation of the lower castes; (ii) it kept the people in the lower wings of the caste hierarchy so isolated that they could not unite with each other for bringing about change in the system, and improving social and economic condition. On the other hand, the high caste people with greater wealth and political power could readily unite and establish inter-regional communication networks which the lower caste people could not even think of. You will learn more about the view of caste ‘from below’ i.e. from the point of view of the lower castes in the next unit.

The supremacy of Brahmins in religious, social and political spheres was collectively and systematically challenged by non-Brahmins in the form of a movement. This entailed mass mobilisation of non-Brahmins against Brahmin dominance. The earliest **non-Brahmin movement** was launched in the mid-

nineteenth century in Maharashtra. After that similar movements were initiated in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu 'where laws relating to government service and places in government-run universities have been written to pointedly discriminate against Brahmins' (Kolenda, 1997: 119).

Berreman (1991) has criticised the Brahmanical view of caste which is drawn heavily from classical Sanskrit texts and focuses on ritual hierarchy leading to strict regimentation of society on the following grounds:

- i) The Brahminical view takes a position that the people conform to universal values unquestioningly while the truth is that individuals have their own will. They doubt and sometimes defy universal values.
- ii) The Brahminical view lays excessive emphasis on ritual hierarchy as the basis of caste organisation undermining the importance of economic and political factors, and power. In real life situations it is neither appropriate nor possible to delineate singular basis (such as ritual hierarchy as done by Dumont) for caste ranking.
- iii) The Brahminical view dismisses any scope of cross-cultural comparison of caste system in India. While it needs to be accepted that caste in India is indeed unique, it is not correct to safeguard it from comparison with similar forms of gradation in other cultures.
- iv) The Brahminical view is based on sacred Sanskrit texts. These texts are, in fact, biased and of limited scope. The perspective that emerges from them, therefore, presents caste as rigid, stiff, stereotyped, and idealized construct.

People at the grass-roots, however, maintain that this perspective is far from reality. Dumont does not take note of the numerous social and political movements in Indian history that sought to overthrow the burden of caste⁴. He does, however, refer to Bhakti movements but notes that they are not able to make any significant impact on caste hierarchy. Most people, especially those belonging to lower castes concede that the Brahminical perspective holds good for the high castes only and does not have a bearing with their own lives. They maintain that it has provided legitimisation of the high handedness and dominance of the Brahmins. More significantly, the subaltern view, among others, the distinct dalit perspective (which is greatly influenced by Ambedkar, Lohia and others) provides an alternative interpretation of the sacred texts and their position on the caste system. Notwithstanding the criticism, the Brahmanical perspective has been a significant component of studies on caste system in academic circles. It has been hotly discussed and debated upon by sociologists, social anthropologists and other social scientists alike.

5.6 Conclusion

We have noted that Brahmins, in effect, draw legitimisation of their position from Hindu religious texts. These texts bestow a degree of sacredness to all that they say and do. Brahmins, in effect, draw legitimisation of their position from Hindu religious texts. These texts bestow a degree of sacredness to all that they say and do. Brahmins, in effect, draw legitimisation of their position from Hindu religious texts. These texts bestow a degree of sacredness to all that they say and do. It is equally true that the Brahmin is not a monolithic, uniform category. The Brahmins are themselves grouped into hierarchical groups based on the nature of their engagement. Those who, accept *pratigraha* or offerings at centers of pilgrimages (better known as *pandas* in

north India and *pandarams* in south India) as the Maithil and Bengali Brahmins of Deoghar, Chaubes of Mathura, Dikshattars of Tamil Nadu and others; accept food and *pratigraha* in mortuary rites and/or at the time of sickness as the Sawalakhi Brahmins of Varanasi, Bhattas of Punjab and others; keep genealogies as the Hakaparas of Bihar and others; and practice agriculture or perform act as cooks or the Tyagi of western Uttar Pradesh are treated as degraded Brahmins (see Saraswati,1977).

Quintessentially the Brahminical perspective on caste as mentioned earlier, is largely drawn from the sacred texts in that it focuses on the principles and ideas that provide the basis on which, ideally, the rituals and conduct of the Brahmins has to be organised. It is in the unceasing flux between the textual constructs and their practice that the dynamism is contained. These principles and ideas that are interpreted and articulated in myriad of ways that make for local variations and yet make for the identity of the Brahmin as a social group.

Notes (comments of the editor)

1. There is an implicit assumption that the Brahminical view is the view expressed by the Brahmins in the scriptural texts. Since this is the most popular view, we accept it in this unit even as we find it necessary to interrogate the issue.
2. There is a need to question the widespread view that *Mahabharata* is a Brahminical text.
3. It ignores the relations of production in agriculture.
4. It is not appropriate to equate Dumont with Brahminical view.

5.7 Further Reading

Dumont,L.,1988 *Homo Hierachicus: The Caste System and its Implications*. Oxford University Press: Delhi

Ghurye,G.S.,1950, *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay

Kolenda,P.,1997, *Caste in Contemporary India: Betond Organic Solidarity*, Rawat Publications. Jaipur

Saraswati,B.N.,1977, *Brahmanic Ritual Traditions*. Indian Institute of Advanced Study: Simla

Unit 6

View from the Field

Contents

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 An Overview of Caste Situation in Different Societies
- 6.3 Field Based Studies
- 6.4 Conclusion
- 6.5 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- distinguish between book-view and field-view of caste
- identify the operative aspects of castes in different societies
- discuss recent changes in the caste system.

6.1 Introduction

Field-view or the view from the field refers to an orientation to the experiences of people, with their inner tensions and contradictions which one seeks to understand and interpret (Beteille, 1997). In fact, Srinivas proposed the distinction between the 'book-view' and the 'field-view' of Indian society. He maintained that there is a book-view of every major institution: of castes, of joint family, and of village community. Accounts based on fieldwork reveal a distinct departure from accounts drawn from the texts. The book-view of the caste system upholds the superior position of Brahmins in the social hierarchy while the untouchables occupy the lowest rungs. There is strict restriction on commensality and mobility. More importantly, the book-view is projected as uncontested and immutable. View from the field particularly in the context of caste situation, brings out lived reality of the people, the articulation of what is contained in the scriptural texts in real life situations. Here, social mobility assumes importance. Further, accounts based on fieldwork reveal a distinct departure from accounts drawn from texts in the sense that the latter bring out the actual working of the caste system at the grassroots.

This unit focuses on the operation of caste at the grass roots. In doing this it takes a departure from the earlier unit on the Brahminical perspective on caste that dealt with ideas about caste contained in the sacred texts. Here we will explore how caste system works in different societies by reviewing some field based studies.

6.2 An Overview of Caste Situation in Different Societies

Many sociologists and anthropologists have tried to analyse the basic tenets of caste system on the basis of their experience in the field. All of them have found new dimensions of caste that were either not present in the book-view of the caste system or was not specifically highlighted by the authors.

Srinivas adds a significant dimension to field-based studies of caste system

in proposing the concepts of sanskritisation and dominant caste. Sanskritisation is the, “process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals beliefs, ideology, and style of life of a high and in particular ‘twice-born’ (dwija) caste. The Sanskritisation of a group has usually the effect of improving its position in the caste hierarchy” (Srinivas, 1989:56). The other concept that assumes importance in the field-view of caste is that of dominant caste which he explains is one which is numerically preponderant and wields economic and political power. What is important to note is that ritual status does not necessarily determine dominance of a caste group over others.

Box 6.1: Sanskritisation and Westernisation

“The idea of hierarchy is central to caste. The customs, rites and way of life were different among the higher and lower castes. The dominant caste punished those who encroached on forbidden ground, but the process could not be stopped. This adoption of the symbols of higher status has been called Sanskritisation. The Lingayats of Mysore Sanskritised their way of life over eight centuries ago. In recent times, Sanskritisation has been widespread both spatially as well as structurally. The Ilavans of Kerala, the Smiths of South India, the Ramgharias of Punjab, the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh and many other castes have all tried to sanskritise their way of life. Liquor and forbidden meals are given up. Sanskritic ritual is increasingly adopted and there is an increasing demand for the services of a Brahmin priest at wedding, birth, funeral rites and *sraddha*.

On the other hand, the higher castes, especially those living in the bigger cities, are undergoing a process of Westernisation. Westernisation, like Sanskritisation, is a blanket term: it includes Western education as well as the adoption of Western ways of life and outlook. It also implies a degree of secularisation and rationalism, and in these two respects it stands opposed to Sanskritisation. In certain other respects, Westernisation helps to spread sanskritisation through the products of its technology — newspapers, radios and films.

In some exceptional cases, the lower castes and tribes are being Westernised without undergoing a prior process of Sanskritisation. Again, Sanskritisation occurs generally as part of the process of the upward movement of castes while Westernisation has no such association. In fact, unlike Sanskritisation, Westernisation is more commonly an individual or family phenomenon and not a caste phenomenon, though some groups (Kodagus) and some areas (Punjab) may be said to be more Westernised than the others. Again, some groups may be more Westernised in the sense that they are highly educated, whereas some others may be Westernised in their dress, food habits and recreation” (Srinivas, 1980:77-78).

Mencher analyses the caste system from bottom-up approach on the basis of fieldwork among ‘untouchables’ in Tamil Nadu. She argues that the functionality of the caste system is only for those castes that enjoy the privileges. On the other hand, the caste located at the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy suffers from economic and social exploitation. She reveals that there has been a protest from the castes located at the lowest rung of the hierarchy, sometimes explicitly other times tacitly. But the fact of the matter is that these protests were not recorded so they do not constitute

significant part of historical evidence. One of the reasons why this happened was because the untouchables could never gather enough courage to lodge their complaint against the so-called upper castes, as they were economically dependent on them.

In a study of Jatavs of Agra, Lynch (1974) has highlighted the fact that the Jatavs who once wanted to sanskritise, rejected the complete process of sanskritisation when they got other avenues of mobility. These avenues, he argues, have been thrown open by the process of parliamentary democracy, and possibilities of political participation of the Jatavs. In this context the Jatavs, hitherto untouchables, with stigmatised identity have taken refuge in the democratic constitution of the social fabric in independent India. They assert their right on the basis of equality and argue for provision of equality of opportunity. The Jatavs formed secular association instead of traditional panchayats. They also contested elections by forming political parties and thereby tried to enhance their social status. They also attained political and economic powers that were denied to them in the traditional caste system.

In another case, Singh (1994:55) discussing patterns of sanskritisation reveals another fact about the rejection of traditional caste hierarchy by the hitherto untouchables. In his words, "The third pattern in Sanskritisation is even more important from a sociological point of view. Sanskritisation in such cases takes place through increased Puritanism and traditionalism in a caste along with rejection of the superiority of the 'twice born' castes." Certain casts of eastern Uttar Pradesh refused to accept water even from the Brahmins, considering them less pure than themselves. Similarly, in many other untouchable castes, the process of Sanskritisation includes the rejection of some models of book-view of caste system'. In this regard Cohn (1955:215) writes:

"Literacy has enabled the Chamars to relate to aspects of the Hindu Great tradition, through reading stories available in vernacular books. Urban employment has enabled Chamars to participate in rituals, derived from the Hindu Great tradition, at low caste temple in the cities. Simultaneously, there continues an earlier movement, the Siva Narayan sect, whose goal was Sanskritisation. Another strand is represented by the celebration of Rai Das birthday, which now is in hands of Chamar college students, who are, among other things, using political action. Their stories about Rai Das have an anti-Brahmin tint to them and they stress right action and right principles rather than the more orthodox activities, worship and rituals". Another aspect that deserves mention is the protest of the non-Brahmin communities against the domination of Brahmins in different parts of the country. The apical position accorded to the Brahmins in the sacred texts was challenged.

Further, we have noted that the caste system has often been considered a system which is maintained rigidly through the practice of endogamy and the ideology of purity-pollution ignoring conflict of power and privileges. The field-view of caste has, however, revealed that the caste system was (and is in the present day too) much influenced by political and economic factors. The study of Nadars of Tamil Nadu is a case in point. Defining the importance of caste in Indian politics, Rudolph and Rudolph (1987) reveal that political clout can be used to change even the status in the caste hierarchy and many rights can be acquired which were once denied to a caste. They took the case of an untouchable community i.e. Shanans of

Tamil Nadu and explained how it could change the social status with the help of political mobilisation and association. In their words, “In 1921, the Shanans succeeded in officially changing their name. Their metamorphosis was wrought neither by the institutions of traditional society nor by findings of the legal system, of the British state customs or the sacred texts of traditional society justified shanan claims. It was government of Madras that wrought this important symbolic change, and its reasons for doing so were in considerable measure political. Nadars (as they were later on called) had brought increasing political pressure to bear on government to recognise the changes in self and social esteem resulting from a century of social change and mobility “ (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987:45).

Box 6.2: Pollution Rules

“Pollution rules are much less strictly observed in cities than in villages. In fact, in certain areas of urban life pollution has ceased to have any application. People mix freely in factories and schools, and very few bother about the caste of fellow-passengers in train and buses. In cities pollution is being increasingly confined to the house, to women and to ritual occasions

In older days the higher castes regarded contact with the lower castes as polluting, and the latter were also subjected to some disabilities. For instance, the lower castes were not allowed to build tiled houses, wear the clothes that the upper castes wore or take out wedding processions in streets inhabited by high castes. Punishment for an offence varied according to the caste of the persons who committed it and against whom it was committed. Mahatma Gandhi roused the conscience of educated Indians about the practice of untouchability. Apart from the injustice, educated Indians realised the political dangers of trying to deny basic conditions of decent living to large numbers of people on the ground of birth in a particular caste. It is this awareness that has led to the adoption of various measures in independent India to put an end to untouchability and to enable the scheduled castes and tribes to advance to the level of the high castes. The grosser expression of untouchability have disappeared in the cities, but in rural areas it still holds sway. The economic emancipation of the Harijans and their increased migration to urban areas are necessary for the complete eradication of untouchability” (Srinivas, 1980:78-79).

The caste system in its traditional form has undergone tremendous change because of politicisation. In the domain of politics, both caste and kin seek to establish new identities and strive for enviable positions. Politicians find caste groupings readily available for political mobilisation. Kothari (1970) explains that, traditionally, there were two aspects of the secular organisation of caste: the governmental aspect which included caste councils, village arbitration procedures and so on; and the political aspect which included the intra-caste and inter-caste authority and status alignments and cleavages. These were dispensed through authority relationships of the local elites and the central political system(s). In the present day, electoral and party politics assume tremendous importance. There is continuous co-option of more and more strata in political-decision making processes. In some regions the Brahmins got involved readily, in others particularly where the Brahmins were not dominant, certain agricultural upper castes got involved

According to the dalits, the caste system was framed by the Aryans to subjugate them. They say that since the Aryans were few in number and,

needed to control the indigenous people i.e., the dalits who were egalitarian, they devised the caste system. Various caste movements as the Adi-Dravid, were led by this ideology (Omvet, 1994). Dalits assert that their conversion to different religions –Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity introduced the element of caste in them too. Later the dalit leaders mobilised the untouchables and Shudras (who constitute the Dalit and other backward classes category in contemporary times) under the banner of majority-minority communities. They argue that the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas constitute only 15 per cent of the population, hence they are in minority to Dalits who constitute the remaining population.

6.3 Field Based Studies

The field-view of caste comes out most clearly from studies at the grass roots by sociologists and social anthropologists. Further, in specific terms the field view localises our understanding of caste and makes the researcher aware about the historical forces operating in the particular village or region down the ages. The field view also equips the researcher to take into account the internal factions within the caste. A researcher can observe everyday interaction between various castes in a village in economic, political and socio-religious spheres in a field situation and then develop a holistic framework for exploring the social status and mobility of different castes.

What follows now are specific, field based studies that bring to light the working of the caste system in the lives of people. Let us turn to a detailed study of some important aspects of field-view with specific examples. Here we have tried to evaluate the analysis of caste undertaken F. G. Bailey, Adrian C. Mayer, McKim Marriott, and O.M. Lynch. The contribution made by these authors is significant because their understanding of caste is based on field view. This means they have tried to look at the caste system in India in operational terms. All the scholars have closely observed and recorded the intra/inter-caste interactions in the villages/regions of their studies and have discussed the implications of such an inter-caste interaction for the ranking of castes in the hierarchy. Nevertheless, they vary in their emphasis and focus of study.

a) Kishangarhi Village in Aligarh

In the village of Kishangarhi located in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, McKim Marriott set out to study the nature of social hierarchy. The village was one with people belonging to different castes, practicing different occupations. Interestingly, all the people did not give the same rank order to castes. Again, there was disparity between the rank ascribed to a caste in the scriptures and that ascribed to it by the people. What this means is that, the castes did not seem to derive their position in the social hierarchy from the highness or lowness of their attributes. In fact some of the attributes such as diet and occupational restrictions were not determinate in ascription of rank to a caste. This stood out in contrast to the emphasis on the two attributes in the texts. He found that the categorisation of food into *pucca* and *kuchha* and its acceptance from those equal in caste rank or refusal from those lower in caste rank was not a sufficient criterion of determining the position of a caste in the hierarchy. In the Kishangarhi village itself the vegetarian castes (as the washerman i.e., Dhobi) and the non- vegetarian caste (as the leather workers i.e., Chamar) occupied the same position in the caste hierarchy.

Marriott found that in relation to the occupational hierarchy or ranking of castes on the basis of purity of occupations, the placement of castes did not follow from the highness or lowness of occupation. Thus, those castes that followed clean occupations were ranked differently; the carpenter was higher than the gardener who was considered higher than the cultivator and so on. The barber, shepherd and several others were, however, placed on the same level of the local hierarchy.

Other scholars note that, castes following clean and pure occupations and food habits are often ranked below those castes that follow the less pure or more polluting occupations. In a Mysore village studied by Srinivas, for example, there were both vegetarian and non-vegetarian castes, and castes following both clean and unclean occupations. The trader's caste is both a vegetarian and follows a clean occupation as compared to other castes such as the peasants. But castes such as the peasants rank above the traders. This shows a discrepancy between the attributes of the caste and its rank.

It is found that a caste may follow a pure occupation and be non-vegetarian or an impure occupation and be vegetarian. Thus both the castes combine the pure and impure attributes. In such a caste, determination of rank is not easy. A caste often consists of an admixture of attributes that are treated as pure and those that are treated as impure. Often, a caste cannot be said to be completely pure or completely impure. Take for instance the case of Brahmins in different parts of the Indian subcontinent. According to the book-view of the caste system, the Brahmins practice pure occupations, such as priesthood, observe purity of diet i.e. strict vegetarianism and teetotalism (i.e., avoidance of alcohol) and, among other reasons, because of these attributes they occupy the highest rank in the hierarchy. But, when we take the example of the Brahmins of Kashmir, Bengal and several other regions we find that they are non-vegetarians and in spite of such dietary habits they continue to occupy important social position in the caste hierarchy. The book-view remains silent on the question of vegetarianism and nature of occupation as being sufficient criteria for determining the position of a caste in social hierarchy neither does it take note of the different permutations in which the attributes combine and recombine in actual lives.

Just as Marriott (1955) found in his village study that castes having the same attributes of diet and occupation, often get ranked differently, F.G. Bailey (1957) in his study of village Bisipara in Orissa, points out how there are many castes in the village each of which is non-vegetarian yet they are ranked differently by the villagers.

b) Caste in Bisipara Village of Orissa

Bailey studied the Bisipara village of Orissa which had several caste groups represented by different population size that varied from one person to 150 people said that caste groups are united into a system through two principles namely segregation and hierarchy. "Castes", according to Bailey (1963:123), "stand in a ritual and secular (political, economic) hierarchy expressed in rules of interaction." Here Bailey sees the caste system as a dynamic one in which different castes are held together by the power of dominant caste. According to him, the component of ritual status of a caste group goes hand-in-hand with the political and economic status. The relationship between castes is simply based on practice of rituals. The concern is with

power because, many castes are subordinate to the dominant caste. In fact, the caste system is held together because of the concentration of power (and force) in the hands of the dominant caste. Since ritual rank is always consistent with political and economic status, once a caste becomes wealthy it changes its pattern of interaction with other castes so that it may claim a higher rank in hierarchy. In other words, a caste's rank in the hierarchy is expressed through its pattern of interaction with the other castes. Here, the pattern of interaction becomes an indicator of its ritual status in the hierarchy. The pattern of interaction includes the acceptance and distribution of food; acceptance of water; willingness to smoke together and/ or to sit together may also be treated as an indicator of pattern of interaction. Exchange of gift is included in the list. Bailey also talks about the interaction between people of same caste spread over different villages in the region. A caste spread over a particular region may come together and strengthen ties through marriage. When this region-wide relationship matures, the caste may strive for power in the political sphere. Bailey explains the aforesaid issue by looking at inter-caste interaction in Bisipara.

Box 6.3: Recent Changes

“Dr. Bailey's study, *Caste and The Economic Frontier* (1958), provides a good example of kind of changes which came in the wake of British rule. In Bisipara, a village in Khondmals in Orissa, two non-landowning castes made money because they could get a monopoly of the profitable trade in hides and liquor. It would have been polluting for the higher castes to handle liquor or hides. Of the two castes one was able to raise itself up in the hierarchy by Sanskritising its ritual and way of life; the other, found that untouchability came in the way of its mobility” (Srinivas, 1986:76).

According to Bailey, generally speaking, in the upper and lower extremes of the hierarchy, one can find perfect correspondence between ritual, political and economic status. In Bisipara, the warriors stood at the top of the caste ritual hierarchy next only to a sole Brahmin family in the village. But in the secular hierarchy consisting of political and economic statuses, warriors were the dominant caste. They owned a large part of the land and dominated the village council. But what happened after the change that swept Bisipara in the post-independence period is more important to note from the vantage point of field-view of caste system. After experiencing the winds of change, the warriors' position came to be ambiguous in the ritual hierarchy because they lost much of their land. Moreover, the merchant caste as well as the distiller caste people came to claim a position next to that of Brahmins. None of these castes would accept food or water from one another anymore. Thus, conflict developed between the distillers and the warriors regarding their position in the ritual hierarchy.

Warriors like the Brahmins, accepted water from the herdsmen caste but not from the distillers. Thus implicitly, the warriors placed the distillers below herdsmen in the ritual hierarchy. The herdsmen, accepted food and water from warriors but refused it from the distillers. The distillers now reacted by accepting food and water only from the Brahmins and no one else. Thus, distillers of Bisipara claimed for themselves a position next to the Brahmins, after attaining wealth and weakening of the economic status of warriors. The Bisipara case of distillers reveals that whenever there is an improvement in political and economic status, castes tend to change their pattern of

interaction only to claim a higher rank in the ritual hierarchy. This is contrary to the book-view that assigns a fixed ritual hierarchy for all the times with Brahmins at the top and the Shudras at the bottom.

Reflection and Action 6.1

Discuss the major factors bringing about change in inter-caste relations.

c) Caste in Ramkheri Village in Madhya Pradesh

Ramkheri village is situated near a small town by the name of Dewas, in Madhya Pradesh. Ramkheri had twenty-five Hindu and two Muslim castes. Commensal relations were strictly regulated, though flexibility was possible occasionally. To understand the hierarchy of commensal relations, Mayer observed the following:

- i) type of activity: eating, drinking water, smoking
- ii) type of food: *pacca* food, *kaccha* food
- iii) the place and context of eating: wedding or mourning
- iv) who is seated next to whom while eating?
- v) who provides the food? who cooks the food?
- vi) in what vessel is water given, brass or earthen pot?

Mayer projects the village as a concrete reality affecting human relationships. It is from the interaction between the various castes in a village that a hierarchy of caste emerges. (See unit of ESO-12 of B.A. Programme) Mayer analyses inter-caste relations and their relation with the unity of the village. Mayer identifies economic and political interaction and more importantly, commensality (inter-dining) as the factors, which determine caste hierarchy in the village.

According to Mayer (1970), it is difficult to measure the ranks on the economic and political basis of caste ranking. The problem with economic and political factors is that, all members may not come together or have interaction in the economic and political sphere. It is also a fact that economic wealth may cut across caste divisions. In other words, a person of a 'high' caste may have a poor economic status and vice versa. These problems are resolved in the context of ritual status. Ritual status in the caste hierarchy uniformly applies to everyone in the caste. Even in the patterns of interaction, it is only the 'commensal hierarchy' that can give an intricate system of relations between castes. In the words of Mayer (1970:59), "The ranking of castes is nowhere more clearly seen than in the commensal rules of eating, drinking and smoking". Caste hierarchy is not determined solely by economic and political factors, although these are important. For him, the single most important factor is commensality, which clearly indicates the hierarchy prevalent in the village.

It is a fact that, "The commensal hierarchy is based on the theory that each caste has certain quality of ritual purity which is lessened, or polluted by certain commensal contacts with castes having inferior quality"(Mayer, 1970: 33). Hence, a superior caste does not eat from the cooking vessels or the hands of a caste that it regards as inferior, nor will its members sit next to the inferior people in the same unbroken line (*pangat*) when eating. Drinking and smoking follow similar rules of exclusion. According to Mayer, "The position

of a caste on the commensal hierarchy can be assessed on the principle that eating the food cooked or served by another caste denotes equality with or inferiority and that not to eat denotes equality and superiority... To put it another way, those from whom all will eat are higher than those from whom none will eat” (Mayer, 1970:34).

Mayer explains, that the Brahmins come first in the undisputed position. The Brahmins of Ramkheri village eat *kaccha* food cooked only by members of their own caste or sub-caste. All the other castes accept the food cooked by the Brahmins and drink freely from their earthen pots. Moreover, according to Mayer, next to the Brahmin in the hierarchy are two groups of castes, one group is vegetarian while the other is non-vegetarian. Rajputs eat non-vegetarian food, but consider barbers and the potters as inferior because they accept *kaccha* food from the inferior carpenter or farmer. The dairymen of Ramkheri accept *kaccha* food only from the Brahmins but from no other caste. Only some most inferior castes (weaver, tanner, sweeper) accept food from them. In a similar way, oil-pressers of Ramkheri are ranked slightly above the dairymen, because at least a few castes above them eat from them. Carpenter, gardener, smith, farmer and tailor castes accept *kaccha* food only from the Brahmins. Carpenter is placed high because he eats only from the Brahmins and the farmer is placed lower than carpenter because he accepts food from Rajputs and potters as well.

Still lower in the hierarchy are the bhilala, mina, nath and drummer. None of these castes accept *kaccha* food from each other. Weavers, tanners and sweepers are at the lowest order of the hierarchy. Sweeper is considered to be the lowliest of all castes in Ramkheri village because he alone eats the left-over from the plates of other castes. Now from the above description of caste hierarchies it becomes clear that the commensal relations in Ramkheri village indicate and express the ritual status of various caste groups. The other indicators of hierarchy as emphasised in the sacred scriptures have been rendered inconsequential.

Reflection and Action 6.2

Discuss how the book-view of caste differs from the field-view of caste. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples.

6.4 Conclusion

We have come to realise that the caste situation at the grass roots presents several dimensions that are not contained in the sacred scriptures. The view from the field lays emphasis on the secular, day-to-day interactions between people belonging to different castes and among people belonging to the same caste. Now, while the texts classify people into four varnas (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra) based on a theory of their origin from different parts of the body of the creator (later the fifth varna comprising those presently known as ‘untouchables’, harijans’ was added) at ground-reality, there are several jatis or castes based on occupation. The book-view of caste was a rigid and closed system with negligible scope for social mobility. The thrust was on rituals, hierarchy based on purity-impurity. Surely, then caste emerged as a static entity. It may be safely concluded that the ‘book-view’ of caste gives us only partial reality of the structure and functioning of the caste system in India. It gives a normative and prescriptive order that does not work in all situations. It can also be ascertained from the above

that the normative principles enshrined in the sacred texts on the basis of which most of the notions of book view of caste are carved for individuals and groups are governed by different principles in a given geographical and socio-political situation. The field situation is plagued with social change and conflict. It also points to the possibility of an alternate way of explaining caste.

The field view brings to light the dynamics of caste relations in which the element of ritual does not remain excessively significant. Wealth and power rather ritual assume greater importance and determine social hierarchy. Dominant caste (defined by Srinivas as one which preponderates numerically over the other castes, and wields preponderant economic and political power) governs inter-caste relations. Education and constitutional provisions for the backward caste have had a profound impact on the operative aspect of the caste system. There is fuzziness of hierarchy in the caste occupying the middle rungs.

6.5 Further Reading

Lynch, Owen, M., 1974 *The Politics of Untouchability*. National Publishing House, Delhi

Mayer, Adrian, C., 1970 *Caste & Kinship in Central India: A Village and its Region*, University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles

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Unit 7

Ambedkar and Lohia on Caste

Contents

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 B.R. Ambedkar on Caste
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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to explain

- Ambedkar's interpretation of the Varna theory
- dysfunctional aspects of the caste system
- annihilation of caste from the perspective of Ambedkar and Lohia.

7.1 Introduction

Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891- 1956) was a Dalit who assumed the role of social, political, and spiritual leader first for the Dalits and subsequently for the whole nation. He gave the country a democratic constitution; as a spiritual leader he revived the legacy of Buddha. On the other hand, Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-1967) — a socialist by ideology championed the cause of the disadvantaged of India including minorities and women. Ambedkar and Lohia identified the caste system as degenerate in Indian society and wanted to annihilate it. That is why towards the fag end of his life Ambedkar was in touch with Lohia exchanging views through letters. In fact both of them wanted to launch a political party with scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and minorities at their base constituency.

This unit consists of views of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar and Ram Manohar Lohia on the caste system in Indian society. It starts with a brief introduction to Ambedkar's interpretation of Hindu social order based on the varna theory and goes on to explore his vision on genesis, and spread of caste system. The unit presents the views of Ambedkar on caste consciousness and its dysfunctional aspect. It also deals with the ideas of Ram Manohar Lohia on the dysfunctional aspects of the caste system and his vision to annihilate it.

7.2 Ambedkar on Caste

Ambedkar drew attention to the rigidity of the caste system and its essential features. He argued that the principle of graded inequality as a fundamental principle is beyond controversy. The four classes are not only different but also unequal in status, one stands above the other. In the scheme of Manu, the Brahmin occupies at the uppermost rank followed by the Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Below the Shudra is the Untouchable. This principle regulates many spheres of life. An officer distributing money and/or other relief material to famine-stricken people, for example would give a larger share to a person of high birth than he would to a person of low birth. The Hindu social order does not recognise equal need, equal work or equal ability as the basis of reward for labour. It favors the distribution of the good things of life among those who are reckoned as the highest in the social hierarchy.

The second principle on which the Hindu social order is founded is that of prescribed graded occupations that are inherited from father to son for each class. The third feature of the Hindu social order according to Ambedkar is the confinement of interaction of people to their respective classes. In the Hindu social order there is restriction on inter-dining and inter-marriages between people of different classes. According to Ambedkar there is nothing strange or peculiar that the Hindu social order recognises classes. There are classes everywhere and no society exists without them even a free social order will not be able to get rid of the classes completely. A free social order, however, aims to prevent isolation and exclusiveness because both make the members of the class inimical towards one another (Ambedkar, 1987: 113).

a) Interpretation of Varna Theory

Ambedkar recognised the existence of four varnas in the Hindu social order. He emphasised that the Hindu social order is primarily based on the class or varna and not on individuals. He opined that the unit of Hindu society is not the individual Brahmin, or the individual, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or the 'Untouchables'. Even the family is not regarded in the Hindu social order as a unit of society except for the purposes of marriage and inheritance. The unit of Hindu society is the class or varna. In the Hindu social order, there is no room for individual merit and no consideration of individual justice. If a person has a privilege it is not because it is due to him/her as an individual. The privilege goes with the class, and if he/she is found to enjoy it, it is because he/she belongs to that class. Conversely, an individual suffers not because he/she deserves it by virtue of his/her conduct; rather it is because he/she belongs to that class.

Ambedkar analysed the impact of the division of the society into varnas on the Hindu social order. He argued that because of this division the Hindu social order has failed to uphold liberty, equality and fraternity — the three essentials of a free social order. The Hindus do believe that god created different classes of people from different parts of his divine body. According to Ambedkar, (1987:100) "The doctrine that the different classes were created from different parts of the divine body has generated the belief that it must be divine will that they should remain separate and distinct. It is this belief which has created in the Hindu an instinct to be different, to be separate and to be distinct from the rest of his fellow Hindus". In the same vein Ambedkar adds, "The most extensive and wild manifestation of this spirit of isolation and separation is of course of the caste-system... Originally, there were four only. Today, how many are there? It is estimated that the total is not less than 2000. It must be 3000... Castes are divided into sub-castes." (Ambedkar, 1987: 102)." The question that Ambedkar raised is, "What fraternity can there be in a social order based upon such sentiments?"

Ambedkar asks, 'Does the Hindu Social Order recognise equality?' He says that while the Hindu social order accepts that men have come from the body of the Creator of the Universe, it does not treat them as equal because they were created from the different parts of his body that are themselves graded in terms of perceived importance and location. The Brahmins were created from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs and the Shudras from the feet. Ambedkar agrees that it is a fact that men were not equal in their character and natural endowments, he opined that the Hindu social order, "refuses to recognise that men no matter how profoundly they differ as individuals in capacity and character, are equally

entitled as human beings to consideration and respect and that the well-being of a society is likely to be increased if it plans its organisation that, whether their powers are great or small, all its members may be equally enabled to make the best of such powers as they possess” (Ambedkar, 1987:106). It is for this reason that he feels that the Hindu social order is against the “equalitarian temper” and does not allow equality of circumstances, institutions and lifestyle to develop.

In the same context, Ambedkar upholds that there is absence of liberty specifically ‘liberty of action’ in the Hindu social order because the occupation and status of the individuals are all fixed on the basis of their birth in a particular family. The same is true for political liberty too. The Hindu social order does not recognise the necessity of a representative government chosen by the people. According to him, though the Hindu social order does recognise that laws must govern the people, it negates the idea that the laws can be made by the representatives chosen by the people. Ambedkar submits that, the Hindus are of the opinion that the law by which people are to be governed already exist in the Vedas and no human being is empowered to bring about a change in the existing laws (Ambedkar, 1987:114).

Reflexion and Action 7.1

Explain Ambedkar’s interpretation of the varna theory

b) Genesis of Caste System in India

Ambedkar studied the definitions of caste proposed by Senart, Nesfield, Risley, and Ketkar closely. According to Senart, “a caste is a close corporation, in theory at any rate rigorously hereditary; equipped with a certain traditional and independent organisation, including a chief and a council, meeting on occasion in assemblies of more or less plenary authority and joining together at certain festival: Bound together by common occupation, which relate more particularly to marriage and food and to questions of ceremonial pollution, and ruling its members by the exercise of jurisdiction, the extent of which varies, but which succeeds in making the authority of the community more felt by the sanction of a certain penalties and above all by final irrevocable exclusion from the group”. Nesfield defines a caste as, “a class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community”. Ambedkar quotes Risley, according to whom, “a caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with specific occupation, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same professional callings and are regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous Community”. Finally, Ambedkar took note of Ketkar’s definition of caste. According to Ketkar caste is, “a social group having two characteristics— I) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born. II) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group”. Reviewing the aforesaid definitions of castes given by different social scientists, Ambedkar emphasises that most scholars have defined caste as an isolated unit.

Ambedkar analyses only those elements from the definitions of castes which he regards peculiar and of universal occurrence. For Senart, the “idea of pollution” was characteristic of caste. Ambedkar refutes this by arguing

that by no means it is peculiar to caste. It usually originates in priestly ceremonialism and in the general belief in purity. Its connection with caste as an essential element may be ruled out because even without it the caste system operates. He concludes that the idea of pollution is associated with caste only because priesthood and purity are old associates and it is the priestly caste, which enjoys the highest rank in the caste hierarchy. Ambedkar identifies the absence of dining with those outside one's own caste as one of the characteristics in Nesfield's definition of caste. He points out that Nesfield had mistaken the effect for the cause. Absence of inter-dining is effect of the caste system and not its cause. Further, Ketkar defines a caste in its relation to a system of castes. Ketkar identified two characteristics of caste, (a) prohibition of inter-marriage and (b) membership by autogeny. Ambedkar argues that these two aspects are not different because if inter-marriage is prohibited, the result is that membership is limited to those born within the group. After critical evaluation of the various characteristics of caste, Ambedkar infers that prohibition or rather the absence of inter-marriage between people of different castes is the only element that can be considered as the critical element of caste. Among the Hindus, castes are endogamous while gotras within a particular caste are exogamous. In spite of the endogamy of the castes, exogamy at the level of gotra is strictly observed. There are more rigorous penalties for those who break the laws of exogamy than those who break the laws of endogamy. It is understandable that exogamy cannot be prescribed at the level of caste, for then caste, as a definite, identifiable unit would cease to exist.

Ambedkar further says that, preventing marriages out of the group creates a problem from within the group, which is not easy to solve. The problem is that the number of individuals of either sex is more or less evenly distributed in a normal group and they are of similar age. If a group desires to consolidate its identity as a caste then it has to maintain a strict balance in the number of persons belonging to either sex. Maintenance of numbers becomes the primary goal because, if a group wants to preserve the practice of endogamy, it is absolutely necessary to maintain a numerical equality between marriageable individuals of the two sexes within the group. Ambedkar (1978: 10) concludes, "The problem of caste, then, ultimately resolves itself into one of repairing disparity between the marriageable units of the two sexes within it." What naturally happens is that there is a 'surplus' of either sex in the society. If a man dies his wife is 'surplus' and if a woman dies her husband is 'surplus'. If the group does not take care of this surplus 'population, it can easily break the law of endogamy. Ambedkar argues that there are two ways in which the problem of 'surplus women' is resolved in society, 'Surplus' women may either be burnt on the funeral pyre of their husbands or strict rules of endogamy may be imposed on them. Since burning of women cannot be encouraged in society, widowhood bringing with it prohibition of re-marriage is imposed on them.

As far as the problem of 'surplus men' is concerned, Ambedkar says that men have dominated the society since centuries and have enjoyed greater prestige than women. The same treatment, therefore, cannot be accorded to them. A widower can remain so for the rest of his life; but given the sexual desire that is natural, he is a threat to the morals of the group particularly if he leads an active social life and not as a recluse. He has to be, therefore, allowed to marry second time with a woman who is not previously married. This is, however, a difficult preposition. If a widower is provided a second woman, then an imbalance in the number women of marriageable age is

created. A 'surplus man' can therefore, be provided wife who has not yet reached marriageable age i.e. a minor girl. Ambedkar identified four means by which numerical disparity between two sexes can be dealt with, burning of widow with her deceased husband; compulsory widowhood; imposition of celibacy on the widower; and wedding of the widower to a girl who has not yet attained marriageable age. In Hindu society, the customs of sati, prohibition of widow remarriage, and marriage of minor girls are practiced. A widower may also observe *sanyasa* (i.e. renounce the world). These practices take care of the maintenance of numerical balance between both the sexes, born out of endogamy.

For Ambedkar, the question of spread and origin of caste are not separated. According to Ambedkar the caste system has either been imposed upon the docile population of India by a lawgiver as a divine dispensation or it has developed according to some law of social growth peculiar to the Indian people. Ambedkar refutes the notion that the law of caste was given by some lawgiver. Manu is considered to be the law-giver of Hindus; but at the outset there is doubt whether he ever existed. Even if he existed, the caste system predates Manu. No doubt Manu upheld it and philosophised about it, but he certainly did not and could not ordain the present order of Hindu society. His work ended with the confiscation of existing caste rules and the preaching of caste *dharma* or duties obligations and conduct associated with each caste. Ambedkar rejects the argument that the Brahmin created the caste. He maintains that it was necessary to dismantle this belief because still there is a strong belief in the minds of orthodox Hindus that the Hindu society was moulded into the framework of the caste system and that it is consciously crafted in the shastras. It may be noted that the teaching and preaching of shastras or the sacred texts is the prerogative of the Brahmins.

Ambedkar agrees with the second argument i.e. of some law of social growth peculiar to Indian people about the spread of caste system. According to western scholars, the bases of origin of various castes in India are occupation, survival of tribal organisations, the rise of new belief system, crossbreeding and migration (Ambedkar, 1978:17). The problem, according to Ambedkar, is that the aforesaid nuclei also exist in other societies and are not peculiar to India. Ambedkar asked, "why they did not 'form' caste in other parts of this planet?" At some stage, the priestly class detached itself from rest of the body of people and emerged as a caste by itself. The other classes that were subject to the law of social division of labour underwent differentiation. Some of these classes got divided into bigger groups and some into smaller ones.

According to Ambedkar, "This sub-division of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called castes. The question is: were they compelled to close their doors and become endogamous, or did they close them of their accord? I submit that there is a double line of answer: Some closed their door: Others found it closed against them. The one is a psychological interpretation and the other is mechanistic, but they are complementary" (Ambedkar, 1978: 18). Explaining the psychological interpretation of endogamy, Ambedkar opined that endogamy was popular in the Hindu society. Since it had originated from the Brahmin caste it was whole-heartedly imitated by all the non-Brahmin sub-divisions or classes, who, in their turn, became endogamous

castes. Ambedkar quotes Gabriel Tarde's law of imitation in this context. According to Tarde, "imitation flows from higher to lower". Secondly, "the intensity of imitation varies inversely in proportion to distance... Distance is understood here in its sociological meaning" (Ambedkar, 1978: 19).

Ambedkar points out that some castes were formed by imitating others because crucial conditions for the formation of castes by imitation existed in the Hindu society. He feels, (i) that the source of imitation must enjoy prestige in the group; and (ii) that there must be "numerous and daily relations" among members of the group. Ambedkar opined that the Brahmin is treated as next to God in Indian society. His prestige is unquestionable and he is the fountainhead of all that is good. He is idolized by scriptures therefore, "Such a creature is worthy of more than mere imitation, but at least of imitation; and if he lives in an endogamous enclosure should not the rest follow his example?" (Ambedkar, 1978:19)

He argues that the imitation of non-Brahmin of those customs which supported the structure of caste in its nascent days until it became embedded in the Hindu mind and persists even today, is testimony to fact that imitation is the cause of formation of caste. The customs of sati, enforced widowhood, and girl marriage are followed in one way or the other by different castes. Ambedkar opines, "Those castes that are nearest to the Brahmin have imitated all the three customs and insist on the strict observance thereof. Those that are less near have imitated enforced widowhood and girl marriage; others, a little further off, have only girl marriage and those furthest of have imitated only the belief in the caste principle"(Ambedkar, 1978: 20).

c) Caste and the Division of Labour

Ambedkar says that the caste system assigns tasks to individuals on the basis of the social status of the parents. Looked at it from another point of view, this stratification of occupations that is the result of the caste system is positively pernicious. Industry is never static. It undergoes rapid and abrupt change. With such changes an individual must be free to change his occupation. Without such freedom to adjust to changing circumstances, it would be impossible for a person to earn a livelihood. Now, the caste system does not allow Hindus to adopt occupations that do not belong to them by heredity. By not permitting readjustment of occupations, caste becomes a cause of much of the unemployment in the country. Furthermore, the caste system is based on the dogma of predestination. Considerations of social efficiency would compel us to recognise that the greatest evil in the industrial system is not so much poverty and the suffering that it involves as the fact that so many peoples have callings that hold no appeal to them. Such callings constantly evoke aversion, ill will and the desire to evade. The occupations that are regarded as degraded by the Hindus such as scavenging evoke aversion for those who are engaged in them. Given the fact that people pursuing such occupations out of some compulsion want to give them up, what efficiency can there be in a system under which neither people's hearts nor their minds are in their work?

d) Socialists and the Caste System

Ambedkar further analyses the steps taken by the socialists to annihilate the caste system through economic development and reforms. Ambedkar questions the wisdom of socialists who professed that acquiring economic power is the only motive by which man is actuated and economic power is the only

kind of power that one can exercise effectively over others. He opined that social status of an individual by itself often becomes a source of power. He suggests that religion, social status, and property are all sources of power and authority that come into play in different situations. Ambedkar feels that without bringing reform in social order one cannot bring about economic change. He also cautioned the socialists that the proletariat or the poor do not constitute a homogeneous category. They are divided not only on the basis of their economic situation but also on the basis of caste and creed. They cannot, therefore, unite against those who exploit them. According to Ambedkar (1978:48), “It seems to me that other things being equal the only thing that will move one man to take such an action is the feeling that other men with whom he is acting are actuated by feeling of equality and fraternity and above all of justice. Men will not join in a revolution for the equalisation of property unless they know that after the revolution is achieved they will be treated equally and that there will be no discrimination of caste and creed. The assurance must be the assurance proceeding from much deeper foundation, namely, the mental attitude of the compatriots towards one another in their spirit of personal equality and fraternity”. The elimination of caste through economic reform is not tenable hence socialists would have to deal with hierarchy in a caste first before effecting economic change.

e) Annihilation of Caste

Ambedkar explains that caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks or a line of barbed wire that prevents the Hindus from free social interaction. Caste is a notion; it is a state of the mind. If someone wants to break the caste system, he/she has to attack the sacredness and divinity of the caste. Ambedkar believed that the real way to annihilate the caste system is “to destroy the belief in the sanctity of the shastras. How do you expect to succeed, if you allow the Shastras to continue to mould the beliefs and opinions of the people? Not to question the authority of the Shastras, to permit the people to believe in their sanctity and their sanctions and to blame them and to criticize them for their acts as being irrational and inhuman is an incongruous way of carrying on social reform. Reformers working for the removal of untouchability including Mahatma Gandhi, do not seem to realise that the acts of the people are merely the results of their beliefs inculcated upon their minds by the Shastras and that people will not change their conduct until they cease to believe in the sanctity of the Shastras on which their conduct is founded” (Ambedkar, 1978: 68).

Ambedkar further added that the caste system has two aspects, it divides men into separate communities; and it places the communities in a graded order one above the other as discussed earlier. The higher the grade of a caste, the greater is the number of religious and social rights. Now, this gradation makes it impossible to organise a common front against the caste system. Castes form a graded system of sovereignties, high and low, which are jealous of their status and which know that if a general dissolution happened, some of them would lose more prestige and power than others. It is, therefore, not possible to organise a mobilisation of the Hindus.

Can you appeal to reason and ask the Hindus to discard caste as being contrary to reason? Here, Ambedkar quotes Manu “So far as caste and varna are concerned, not only the Shastras do not permit the Hindu to use his reason in the decision of the question, but they have taken care to see that no occasion is left to examine in a rational way the foundations of his belief

in caste and varna”(Ambedkar, 1978: 72). Ambedkar argues that if one wanted to dismantle the caste system then one would have to implement law(s) to change the caste system. He proposes the following reforms within the Hindu religion in order to dismantle the caste system. (i) There should be one and only one standard book of Hindu Religion, acceptable to all Hindus and recognised by all Hindus; (ii) it would be appropriate if priesthood among Hindus was abolished, failing which the priesthood should at least cease to be hereditary. Every person who professes to be a Hindu must be eligible for the position of a priest. Law should ensure that no Hindu performs rituals as a priest unless he has passed an examination prescribed by the state and holds a permission from the state to practice; (iii) no ceremony performed by a priest who does not hold the permission would be deemed to be valid in law, and a person who officiates as priest without the permission should be personalised; (iv) a priest should be the servant of the state and should be subject to the disciplinary action by the state in the matter of his morals, beliefs; and (v) the number of priests should be limited by law according to the requirements of the state. These, according to Ambedkar, would provide the basis for the establishment of a new social order based on liberty, equality and fraternity, in short, with democracy.

Having analysed the exploitative nature of Hindu social order born out of varnas, castes and sub-castes, Ambedkar gives his own vision of an ideal social order. He looked forward to a society based on liberty, equality and fraternity. Fraternity creates more channels for association and sharing experiences. This helps in establishing an attitude of respect and reverence among the individuals towards fellowmen. For Ambedkar, liberty benefits the people by giving them freedom of choice of occupation. Lastly, it is a fact that all men are not equal in terms of their physical and economic endowment people alike these elements were absent in a caste-ridden society.

7.3 Ram Manohar Lohia on Caste

Ram Manohar Lohia believed that caste system is directly related with the division of labour. According to him caste system will exist in one form or the other wherever there is hereditary production though on a small-scale. Further, he said that whenever there is centralisation of land or when landowning classes hold power, there would be Kshatriya varna. Wherever there is priestly class for the assistance of Kshatriya, there will be Brahmin varna. Wherever there is agriculture, and exchange, there will be Vaishya varna, and wherever the branches of production are developed in special form of branches of artisans, there will exist a Shudra varna.

The development of caste system is related with the development of craft knowledge. Brahman is a varna, but the varna in itself does not connote an occupation. This is also true of the Kshatriya and Vaishya varna. Vaishyas, for example, can be traders, agriculturists and/or pastoralists. They do not follow only one occupation. Reference to Kumhar, Lohar, Sunar, and Chamar is, however, accompanied with connotation of occupation. Hence according to Lohia castes are, in reality, found in the Shudra varna only. With the development of one kind of craft, a group of peoples get associated with it. All the kinds of crafts are collectively put together.

The Jat, Gujar, Ahir are groups, which are treated as jats. We don't come to know about any occupation just by reference to a jati. The trade of milk

is now associated with Ahirs. Traditionally the Ahirs, were not traders of milk. According to Lohia they were a republic society, which settled in India and then merged with the federal system. This merger gave them the identity of a caste. Further, according to him, endogamy is the second characteristic of the caste system. There are number of gotras in a particular caste. Individuals of a given gotra believe that that they have descended from a common ancestor and are of common blood. It is for this reason that people of a gotra do not marry among themselves. They marry outside their gotra but within the caste.

Box 7.1: Caste Restricts Opportunity

“Unlike the Marxist theories which became fashionable in the world in the 50’s and 60’s, Lohia recognised that caste, more than class, was the huge stumbling block to India’s progress. Then as today, caste was politically incorrect to mention in public, but most people practiced it in all aspects of life – birth marriage, association and death. It was Lohia’s thesis that India had suffered reverses throughout her history because people viewed themselves as members of a caste rather than citizens of a country. Caste, as Lohia put it, was congealed class. Class was mobile caste. As such, the country was deprived of fresh ideas because of the narrowness and stultification of thought at the top, which was comprised mainly of the upper castes, Brahmin and Baniyas, and tight compartmentalisation even there, the former dominant in the intellectual arena and the latter in the business. A proponent of affirmative action, he compared it to turning the earth to foster a better crop, urging the upper caste as he put it, “to voluntarily serve as the soil for lower castes to flourish and grow”, so that the country would profit from a broader spectrum of talent and ideas. In Lohia’s words, “Caste restricts opportunity. Restricted opportunity constricts ability. Constricted ability further restricts opportunity. Where caste prevails, opportunity and ability are restricted to ever-narrowing circles of the people”. [2] In this own party, the Samyukta (united) Socialist Party, Lohia promoted lower caste candidates both by giving electoral tickets and high party positions. Though he talked about caste incessantly, he was not a casteist — his aim was to make sure people voted for the Socialist party candidate, no matter what his or her caste. His point was that in order to make the country strong, everyone needed to have a stake in it. To eliminate caste, his aphoristic prescription was, “Roti and Beti”, that is, people would have to break caste barriers to eat together (Roti) and be willing to give their girls in marriage to boys from other castes (Beti),” (cited from Ramakrishnan, 2005: 2-3).

Quoting Marx, Lohia writes that there is division of labour in the society and people get associated with an occupation. Division of labour leads to specialisation in labour. Large number of branches of production also emerges. People, therefore enter in exchange relationship with other societies (Marx, 1867: 353). According to Lohia the important aspect in Marx’s writing is that the exchange takes place not only at individual level, but also at the level of family and tribe. Production takes place at the family level too. Marx believed that the exchange does not take place at individual level. From this we should understand that one or two people do not participate in production, trade and exchange. The whole family takes part in these processes.

Lohia believes that the caste system is restricted to the Shudra varna. He said that the leaders of the society always want to preserve the varna system (Sharma, 2000). He argues that the custodians of society are not bothered if the individuals from the lower varna change their occupation and status but if they try to take up the occupation of the higher varna people and aspire to acquire their status then it is dysfunctional for the society and is strongly resisted by the elite groups (Plato quoted in Sharma, 2000).

a) Dysfunction and Annihilation of Caste

Lohia was of the opinion that caste system in India is the largest single cause of the present material and spiritual degeneration of the country. People often equate the prosperity of their own caste with the country's progress. This is detrimental to the nation's progress. Several political parties talk about abolition of the caste system. Lohia pointed out that while women, harijans, shudras, depressed Muslims and Christians, and Adivasis constitute more than 85 per cent of the total population, their representation in the domains of politics, army, trade, and highly paid government jobs is dismal. Caste system can be abolished only when this imbalance is corrected. He strongly felt that the backward castes should get the opportunity to lead. They should get at least 60 per cent of the key posts in public life. This change should be effected through legal protection. Lohia was optimistic about the preferential opportunity extended to the backward classes. He thought this way India would emerge as a powerful nation.

Box 7.2: Preferential Opportunities

"Lohia identified the prevalent caste system to be the main cause of India's degeneration in all respects including economic and spiritual. According to him, the caste system crushes the human spirit and individual freedom of low castes. For this reason, he suggested special opportunity to be provided to the backward classes. He argued that preferential opportunities should be provided to scheduled caste and other backward sections of the society. Lohia pointed out that backward class consists of women, Harijans, Shudras, Adivasis, depressed Muslims,..... High caste, English education and wealth are the main criteria of India's ruling class therefore, Lohia suggested that preference should be given to these backward classes in the matters of land distribution, employment, and educational opportunities" (Nath, 2002: 216).

Lohia also wanted that the backward castes should understand their own shortcomings. He opined that a lower stratum of society instinctively imitates the elite groups. The backward castes should refrain from imitating the vices of the twice-born castes. Those of the low-caste who hold the positions of leadership must get rid of jealousy and should endeavor to acquire a strong character, because jealousy would throw leadership into the hands of people with evil intentions. Another obstacle in the way of progress of the backward castes is the consolidation of power in the hands of few. Hundreds of 'backward castes' that constitute two-thirds of India's population continue to aspire for access to resources. For parliamentary elections, such backward castes should get our attention. Leaders should be created from their ranks, so that their voices and actions may infuse and inspire satisfaction, self-respect and fearlessness among them.

To make a backward caste prosperous in its collectivity, self-respect and fearlessness are important. A political programme to attack the caste system

must be coupled with social activities such as collective feasting. Lohia was convinced that literature, participation dramas, fairs, and games might serve, as media of cultural interaction, exchange, and diffusion. Arguing against the case that by the destruction of capitalist system through class struggle caste will automatically wither away, Lohia, said, “In the first place, in a country cursed with the caste system, it is not possible to end the feudal and capitalist inequalities through class struggle alone. Moreover, why are those, who view class struggle as inevitable for the establishment of a classless society, so much averse towards caste struggle for creation of a casteless society?” One must strive for destroying class and caste through non-violent and peaceful means of propaganda, organisation and struggle.

b) Lohia’s End Caste Conference

Lohia organised a conference “End Caste Conference” in Patna, on March 31- April 2, 1961 and passed the following resolution for the annihilation of caste in India:

- 1) Mixed Dinner: The Conference appealed to the people of India and its units to organise mixed dinner parties everywhere in the country especially in the village.
- 2) Marriage: The Conference was of the opinion that the caste system can be destroyed only when inter-caste marriages became common. To propagate these ideas discussions, plays and fairs should be organised. The enforcement of inter-caste marriages by government would not suffice. The Conference was clear that here inter-caste marriage would mean the marriage between Dvija and Shudras or Syeds and Julahas, and not between different sub-castes among high-castes.
- 3) The Conference suggested opined that titles affixed to names should be evolved in such a way that it does not indicate the caste of a person.
- 4) The Conference also passed a resolution for granting special opportunities to those who have been oppressed for thousands of years so as to bring about a positive change, in the traditional set up in society because the caste system results in erosion of strength and ability of these. Keeping in mind the question of merit the Conference resolved, “Whether able or not, Women, Shudras, Harijans, Backward Castes, Adivasis, and Muslims like weavers will have to be given 60 per cent reservation “(Lohia, 1964: 141).

The Conference agreed that religious, social, and economic programs would have to be carried out along with a political program to eradicate the caste system. Landless lower castes will have to be provided of land for cultivation and housing by way of re-division of land or through land army. Further, “Religion will also have to be cleared of its rubbish about castes” (Lohia, 1964: 141).

Reflection and Action 7.2

Compare Ambedkar’s and Lohia’s ideas about annihilation of caste.

7.4 Conclusion

As you would have realised, the ideas of Ambedkar and Lohia converge on many counts. Both of them regarded caste as an oppressive, exploitative system which restricts opportunities and create imbalances and inequalities. Both of them agreed that caste should be annihilated through they differed

in the basic approach and the means to annihilate it. While Ambedkar talked about one, common book of Hindu religion and abolition of the institution of traditional priesthood, Lohia focused attention on creating situations of common feasting cultural interactions and cultural exchange. It also favoured implementation of preferential polities for the weak and the downtrodden.

7.5 Further Reading

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Unit 8

Census Perspective

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- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Caste in the Census
- 8.3 The Census and Identity Politics
- 8.4 The Impact of the Census on a Sociological Understanding of Caste
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Learning objectives

After going through this unit. you will be able to

- understand the importance of census in constituting caste identity
- explain the articulation of caste in census operations from a sociological perspective
- discuss the view points regarding inclusion of caste as an essential component in the census.

8.1 Introduction

The decennial census is an important source of information for certain aspects of India's society and economy. The census contains information about the number of people, their age, sex, occupation, educational level and the like. While pre-colonial states also conducted censuses, this was usually for the limited purposes of taxation and conscription to the army (see Anderson 1991: 169 for the Malayo-Javanese context; Smith 2000: fn1, on the Ottoman empire).. The enumeration of caste too was not entirely a new practice introduced by the British colonial government : the Manusmriti, Kalhana's Rajatarangini and the Ain-i-Akbari, all have lists of castes. However, the census, as we know it today, in terms of scale, the kind of information collected, and the variety of administrative uses to which it is put, can be traced to the modern bureaucratic state. For the British colonists in particular, the census was seen as an essential tool to understand, and thereby control, the large and diverse Indian population.

Caste and religion were viewed as important sociological categories which would explain a variety of other issues — including what we now clearly recognise as unrelated factors like insanity, intelligence, desire and ability to fight in the army etc. While religion continues to be enumerated in the census, caste (for categories other than scheduled caste and scheduled tribe) has disappeared from it.

Caste was a key census variable from 1871 to 1931. The census of 1931 was the last census to provide tables of the distribution of population on the basis of caste. Although caste returns were collected in 1941 they were not tabulated owing to war time economy measures. In 1951, apart from data on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, limited caste returns were collected from other 'backward castes'. However, the results were not published and were only made available to the First Backward Classes Commission (Roy

Burman 1998; Galanter, 1984: 164)). The constituent legislative assembly framing the Census Act of 1948 decided not to include the component of caste on the grounds that the portrayal of India as a land of many castes, languages and religions had been used by the British colonial authorities to claim that Indians would never be able to unite and govern themselves and therefore needed the British to rule them. However, the government continued to record information on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, in order to monitor the success of various government programs to improve their situation. In the run up to the 2001 census, there was a fresh debate over whether a person's caste should be recorded in the census. One view was that it was necessary to include caste so that the economic and social status of each caste could be measured, while the other view was that it would be difficult to identify castes and such enumeration would unnecessarily enhance 'casteism'. Eventually, it was decided not to include caste in the census.

This unit will deal with the manner in which the census in India has dealt with caste; the effect of caste enumeration in the census on caste identity; the influence of the census on the conceptualisation of caste in sociology; and the debate which arose in the late 1990s over whether caste should be included in the 2001 census.

8.2 Caste in the Census

The term caste is commonly accepted as having originated from the Portuguese term *castas* to describe breeds, species, tribes etc., and refers both to the four classical *varna* categories and to the *jatis* or the specific local units in which people identified themselves.. In the 17th and 18th centuries, there was considerable fluidity both at the level of *jatis* and *varnas*. Economic differentiation, migration and ecological difference all played a role in creating new castes or enabling people to change their caste identities, through fission and fusion of *jatis*. In the unsettled conditions following the break-up of the Mughal empire, many chiefs of *adivasi* ('Scheduled Tribe') or low caste background became kings in their own areas. They claimed Rajput or Kshatriya (warrior) status and employed Brahman priests to invent suitable genealogies for themselves (Sinha, 1962). There was no all-India ranking of castes, and caste ranking changed over time. Dirks (1993), for instance, has argued that the separation of religion and politics and the ritual exaltation of the Brahman over the Kshatriya in south India is a product of the colonial period.

As colonial rule became more entrenched, the colonial administrators needed to know and understand their native populations in order to govern them. In the 19th century, 'race' became a scientific pre-occupation with many studies carried out to classify races. (Of course, contemporary science and genetics has shown us that there is no such thing as biological race). The decennial census, along with the series of Imperial Gazetteers, Ethnographic Surveys, Settlement Records etc. played an important role in promoting certain ideas of caste and race. Caste and religion were seen as key categories with which to explain 'native' behaviour:

It is unnecessary to dwell at length upon the obvious advantage to many branches of the administration in this country of an accurate and well arranged record of the customs and domestic and social relations of the various castes and tribes. The entire framework of

native conduct of individuals are largely determined by the rules of the group to which they belong. For the purposes of legislation, of judicial procedure, of famine relief, of sanitation and dealings with epidemic disease, and of almost every form of executive action an ethnographic survey of India, and a record of the customs of the people is as necessary an incident of good administration as a cadastral survey of the land and a record of the rights of its tenants (Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India in the Home Department (Public), Simla, 25 May 1901).

Thus colonial authorities used caste to explain insanity, the latter “being a disease associated with the socially higher and economically more provident classes” (Census of India, 1921, Vol. I, Part I: 209); to help in the recruitment of ‘martial races’ to the army; or to determine which groups had a propensity to crime (thus creating the category of ‘criminal tribes’).

However, recording caste in the census was not an easy task. Successive Census Commissioners described the caste tables as the most troublesome and expensive part of the census, pointing to the vague and contextual nature of responses (Census of India, Risley, 1903:537; Census of India, Yeatts, 1941:20). Yet, upto 1931, it was seen as a necessary part of the demographic record and essential for governance. The consequence was a form of systematisation that slotted people into arbitrary, often untrue to their experience, but separate, mutually exclusive and thereby *enumerable* categories. In 1881, in Madras presidency alone, the inhabitants returned 3208 different castes, which through grouping were reduced to 309 (Report by the Officers appointed to Consider the Suggestions for a General Census in India in 1881, National Archives Library).

Box 8.1: Collection of information for the Census

“In the development of a classification system for castes, there were two interlocked but operationally separable problems: the actual question which an enumerator asked an individual; then how his answer was interpreted by a clerk and eventually by a supervisor of the census of a district or of a larger unit. The actual taking of the census was a two-step affair. Enumerators were appointed by circle supervisors, who were usually government officials. Supervisors were patwaris, zamindars, school teachers or anyone who was literate. They were given a form with columns on which was to be entered information about every member of a house-hold. The information to be collected was name, religion (e.g. Hindu, Muslim), sect, caste, subdivision of caste, sex, age, marital status, language, birthplace, means of subsistence, education, language in which literate and infirmities. There was a one-month period before the actual date of the census in which the enumerator was to fill in the forms, and then on the day of the census he was to check the information with the head of the household.

As an aid to achieving standardisation in the recording of information on caste and subcaste, lists were prepared as early as the 1881 census which gave standard names with variations for the castes. The supervisors were supposed to instruct the enumerators in how to classify responses. The lists of castes were alphabetically arranged giving information giving information on where they were to be found and containing very brief notes” (Cohn, 1987 : 243-44).

The process was described by Risley thus:

“If the person enumerated gives the name of a well known tribe or caste...all is well. But he may belong to an obscure caste from the other end of India; he may give the name of a sect, of a sub-caste, of an exogamous sept or section....his occupation or the province from which he comes. These various alternatives...undergo a series of transformations at the hands of the more or less illiterate enumerator who writes them down in his own vernacular and the abstractor in the Central Office who transliterates them into English. There begins a laborious and most difficult process of sorting, referencing, cross-referencing and corresponding with local authorities, which ultimately results in the compilation of Table XIII showing the distribution of the inhabitants of India by Caste, Tribe, Race or Nationality”(Risley, 1903:537).

Hutton also remarked on the fact that the number of castes enumerated had gone down from 1881 to 1931, and that ‘the methods employed must have been arbitrary’ but noted the inevitability of the selective system of classification, where individuals were asked not just what their sub-caste was but which of the *listed* sub-castes they fitted into (Home Public F. No. 45/17/30, NAI). As Peter Ratcliffe notes, a pre-coded approach, even with room for ‘other-please specify’ options, tends to structure responses and introduce distortions (Ratcliffe, 1996:8).

Further, a census systematisation could not allow a person to have two castes or two religions. Even when religious syncretism was recognised, it was dismissed as “the essentially primitive character of the religion of the illiterate and uncultured masses”. Where the 1911 census had recognised several sects as Hindu-Muhammadans, in 1921 they were reclassified as either one or the other, except for the Sindh Sanjogis who completely refused and were therefore relegated to ‘other’ (Census of India, Marten, 1921: 115). At the same time as the census authorities standardised and reduced the number of castes, they also insisted on recording all sorts of sub-castes in an effort to appear fully scientific and to cover the entire social space.

8.3 Census and Identity Politics

Much of the recent social science literature on caste and the Indian census has followed Michel Foucault’s theoretical perspective which emphasises the role of ‘technologies’ of government (i.e. administrative procedures) in creating identities. They argue, therefore, that caste and religion censuses hardened caste and religious identities (Cohn, 1990; Pant, 1987; Appadurai, 1993; Kaviraj, 1992). In his early and influential essay, Cohn noted that by asking questions about religion, language, literacy, caste, occupation etc., the census ‘objectified’ culture and took it out of context, ‘it provided an arena for Indians to ask questions about themselves,’ and the questions which they asked or the definitions they used were those which the British used to govern them with (Cohn, 1990: 230). Appadurai has gone further in arguing that the “deadly politics of community...would not burn with the intensity we now see, but for contact with the techniques of the modern nation-state, especially those having to do with number “ (Appadurai, 1993: 336). Statistics on identities became important as communities demanded guarantees and benefits from the government on the basis of numbers. Representation which means, ‘standing on behalf of ’ came to be confused with representativeness which means, ‘coming from a particular community’

(see Appadurai, 1993: 332; see also Kaviraj, 1992). Thus, for example, the idea came to gain ground that Rajputs should and would vote only for a Rajput candidate, Hindus for a Hindu candidate and so on. This perspective continues to govern the way political parties distribute tickets.

However, not all caste mobilisation can be blamed on the census alone, and the mobilisation around the census was only one of the forms which public activity took. Often, census figures themselves were products of caste mobilisation rather than creating it. For example the number of Maithili speakers varied quite dramatically between 1901, 1951 and 1961, depending on the strength of the Maithili language movement, and the extent to which people identified themselves as Maithili, rather than any changes in population per se (Burghart, 1993: 787). Conlon notes that his attempt to trace changes in educational and occupational status for Chitrapur Saraswats between 1901 and 1931 floundered on the fact that this was a period of a caste unification movement between Chitrapur Saraswats and Gaud Saraswats. Using figures for Gaud Saraswat Brahmans as well created a different problem in that participation in the unification movement had itself been an object of controversy within the caste, and therefore the unified category did not include all Saraswats. (Conlon, 1981: 115-116). In the recent past, Sharad Kulkarni has pointed out that the context of reservations had created problems of reliability in the 1981 census data when several non-tribes with similar sounding names to tribes returned themselves as tribals. This made it difficult to get a true picture of the changing position of certain tribes — levels of population, urbanisation and literacy appeared to have risen, whereas in fact this was due to fraudulent returns (Kulkarni, 1991).

It is not just perceptions about the advantages of being seen to have larger numbers (e.g. the Maithili example) but also individuals' perceptions about the advantages of returning a particular status that influence figures. Although census returns are confidential and cannot be used for any other purpose, the conditions under which census enumeration gets done and the fact that the enumerator is usually a local schoolteacher or someone similar (even if not someone personally known to the respondent) could make it an occasion for negotiating status. This is not obviously an argument against having such figures, but an argument for the need to carefully contextualise quantitative data in a historical, political and cultural framework. While demanding census data to study the changing condition of certain groups, or even to get a one-shot map of groups, one should be careful in assuming the degree to which they will be practically useful, as well as wary of the politics which unthinking use of the data as 'objective' facts implies.

The object of mobilisation changed over time, as the purposes of the census changed. in the service of the state. Wider political events determined both the use to which census data would be put, and public reaction to it. Thus, the comparative numbers of Hindus and Muslims became an issue in the 1931 and 1941 census due to the communal award (in legislatures) and the prospect of partition; the need to disaggregate speakers of different languages in multi-lingual talukas became necessary in the 1951 census as the basis for a linguistic reorganisation of states. Finally, from 1921 onwards, economic issues achieved greater importance. As the nation developed, what mattered as much as the differentiation between castes was comparative statistics between countries, which ranged the population figures of one country against that of another, with its accompanying indices of literacy, occupations, degree of urbanisation, etc. Much depends on how 'the nation'

(or rather dominant groups within the nation), defines itself at any given point of time, and as this changes, so do identities, and indices of progress. There has, for instance, been a struggle to have more gender sensitive indexes in terms of sex ratios, female workforce participation or property rights (see Centre for Women's Development Studies, 1998).

Broadly speaking, there were three avenues in which mobilisation around ascriptive identity in the census expressed itself during the colonial period: petitions to have names of castes changed with a view to achieving a higher social status; complaints about the form of questions, including questioning the need for a caste return itself; and thirdly, complaints about the biases of enumerators. The reactions of the Census Commissioners were generally negative to the latter two forms, while the first was admitted as further evidence of the control that categories like religion and caste had over Indians. We shall go through each of these in turn looking at the manner in which the framing of census questions and tabulations generated political arguments, the form which responses took, and the reactions by census authorities.

A) Petitions regarding changes in caste names or classification: This was by far the most common reaction set in motion by census questionnaires, and continues even today at the level of representations to Backward Class Commissions (Dahiwalé, 1998; Reddy, 1990: 32). Although castes had been enumerated since 1871, it was really only after Risley's 1901 ranking of castes in order of 'native opinion on social precedence' that these demands became numerous and strident. Risley took this as evidence of the soundness of his own principles: "If the principle on which the classification was based had not appealed to the usages and traditions of the great mass of Hindus, it is inconceivable that so many people should have taken so much trouble and incurred substantial expenditure with the object of securing its application in a particular way." (Risley, 1903: 539). But the problem is that castes soon adapted themselves to the new arena offered by the colonial government for advancement. Since Risley had concluded that absence of widow remarriage and the practice of female infanticide were evidence of high status, many castes claimed to be following these practices in order to raise their status in official circles.

Some of the claims to higher status names rested upon similarities of names, which were supported by affidavits of leading persons on caste customs, as for example the claim of the Khatri that their name was really a corruption of Kshatriya (Home Dept. Census A, June 1901, Pro. No. 12-13, NAI). Several caste petitions, like that of the Vishwabrahmans and Namobrahmas, blamed jealous Brahmins of other sub-castes for keeping them down, and several, like the Lodhi Rajputs and Vishwabrahmans cited earlier colonial ethnographies, like Enthoven's *Tribes and Castes of Bombay* or Tod's *Annals* as proof of their Brahminical or Kshatriya customs (Home-Census Part B, July 1901, pro. 1/2 on Khatri; Home Public, File No. 45/75/30-Public on Namobrahmas; Home Public F. No. 45/52/30 on Lodhi Rajputs; Home Public F. No. 45/58/1930 on Vishwa-Brahmas; Home Public F. No. 45/44/30 on Saini Khatri, all in NAI).

There were also some petitions which did not directly have to do with status, but merely demanded separate enumeration from a larger group or asked for the merger of several sub-castes into a generic caste name, such as that from the All India Yadav Sabha, resolving that all sections of the

Yadavs should be recorded as Yadavs. One file lists sixty five such petitions. (Home Public F. No. 45/11/41, Part I & II, Complaints or representations from organisations representing different communities about matters of communal interest arising in regard to the Census enumeration, NAI).

At the census level perhaps it involved nothing more serious than a change in name, but more important was the wider processes that it set in motion. Previously dispersed sub-castes or castes ‘recognised’ themselves by forming caste sabhas. While the demand for increased material benefits in the form of scholarships or recruitment to the army were often an essential part of their demands (see Cohn, 1990: 249), internal social reform, providing scholarships to their own community etc. were also common. A pamphlet “*Nayee: A Brahman*” by Pandit Revati Prasad Sharma, while part of the claims of the Nais’ to Brahmin status, calls upon fellow caste men: “Comrades! all the educated members of the community all over India! Let us join and gather ourselves under the flag of the Akhil Bharatiya Nayee-Brahman Mahasabha to consider upon the ways of amelioration of the society, collecting funds, awarding scholarships and imparting education and strength to the community” (Pandit Revati Prasad Sharma, *Nayee: A Brahman*, Nayee Brahman Prakashan Samiti, Benaras, Jan 1931, p. 71 in Home Public F. No. 45/39/31, NAI).

The Census Commissioners’ reactions to this outpour of caste petitions were generally one of amused irritation. Usually, commissioners ruled in favour of or against the change even when clearly they had no competency to do so in terms of religious or social knowledge. , At certain times, the reaction was one of indifference. J.H. Hutton, Census Commissioner in 1931, for example, noted on the Namobrahma case that it didn’t matter ‘in the least’ what they were called so long as the community was identifiable from one census to the next (F.No. 45/75/30-Public, NAI).

B) Complaints about the form of questions or tabulations: In the 1930s and 1940s, there were two prominent contexts in which complaints about the formats in which respondents were asked to return themselves surfaced. In some way both were connected with growing Hindu communal assertion, even though ostensibly they were about recording castes (see Jones, 1981 for a fuller description of religious identity in the census). At the same time, the answers bring out very clearly a firm commitment to a colonial view of Indian society as irreparably characterised by divisive caste and religious categories.

The first was the petition by various Hindu sabhas as well as the Jat Pat Torak Mandal, an organisation connected to the Arya Samaj in Lahore, asking not to have caste returns in the census (Home Public F. No. 45/46/30; Resolution No. 4, passed at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Bengal Hindu Sabha on 15.9.1930 in Home Public F. No. 45/67/1930; F. No. 45/65/30, all in NAI). The Jat Pat Torak Mandal was a society made up of adult Hindus who pledged to enter into intercaste marriages either themselves or for their children. In their petition to have caste returns in the census waived for those who did not believe in it, they argued that since the caste system was not an essential part of Hinduism, had impeded the progress of the community, and many of the educated sections had been greatly changed by Western education and culture, “there is an overwhelming majority...who have lost faith in the utility of caste.” They emphasised that “to record caste against the name of an individual when he does not believe in it would be forcing caste upon him” and further that “the census clerks are not

expected and should not import their personal knowledge into the census operations.” (Petition from the Jat Pat Torak Mandal, Lahore, August 18, 1930, Home Public F. No. 45/46/30, NAI). The Hindu Mahasabha did not want a caste census so that they could show that the Hindus were numerous and united in order to counter Muslim demands for representation (see Jones, 1981: 89). The Muslim league was similarly resistant to the idea of recording castes among Muslims. The government made it clear that while it was prepared to allow “conscientious objectors” like the various reform sects to return themselves as having no caste, it objected to orthodox Hindus refusing to answer the question, when socially they followed caste rules.

The fact that a mere 1.8 million out of 238 million Hindus returned ‘no-caste’ in 1931, i.e. less than one percent was later cited as evidence that Indians were very caste conscious (Home Public F. No. 1/1/39, NAI). While it is true that this is a very small figure, it is equally clear that the majority were not given the choice of returning ‘no-caste’. Even had respondents not returned their own caste, the enumerators would have done it for them. In fact, in 1941, the number of people returning no-caste, especially in Bengal, was large enough to prompt the Census Commissioner to note that in time the caste question could be easily set aside in favour of a ‘community’ question (Census of India 1941, Vol.1, part 1, by M.W.M. Yeatts. Government of India (GOI): GOI Press, Simla).

Another major demand of the Hindu Mahasabha was that adivasis should be returned as Hindus (Home Public F. No. 45/57/31 on the resolution of a local Hindu sabha in Assam, NAI). During this period the Hindu Sabhas were also active in proselytising among tribals, highlighting the similarities between their religion and that of the Hindus. The demand for adivasis to be termed Hindus became quite strident in Chota Nagpur. Village meetings of ‘Sanatani Adivasis’ were held from October to December 1940, resolutions were passed and reported in newspapers (*Indian Nation*, *Amrit Bazaar Patrika*, *Searchlight*) accusing the Catholic Sabha of asking enumerators (the majority of whom they claimed were Christian) to record tribal names for non-Christian adivasis. Most of those presiding over the meetings or going in deputation to the Census Commissioner, however, appear to be Hindu townspeople who looked down on adivasis. Their views were reflected in the *Amrit Bazaar Patrika* editorial: “By the bye, what is this tribal religion? What are its tenets? Does any such thing really exist in this country?” (Home Public F.No. 45/39/40, NAI).

As against this, the Bihar government also received a large number of petitions from individual adivasis and associations representing them claiming that they had not been given a hearing before the census instructions were issued (Home Public F. No. 45/39/40, NAI). On 9 March, 1940 a large meeting of Muslims, attended by various SC and adivasi representatives was held to counter a Hindu meeting on the 6th. There were complaints that Hindu enumerators had circulated Congress and Mahasabha leaflets containing the misinformation that government had ordered that adivasis should be recorded as Hindus (Home Public F. No. 45/11/41, NAI).

Similar problems were seen in terms of how to return Sikhs and Jains, with the Hindu Mahasabha and some Sikh and Jain organisations asking for them to be classified as Hindus (Home Public F. No. 45/4/31; Home Public F. No. 45/47/30, petition of Udasi Sadhus, NAI) and several complaints by representatives of scheduled caste associations, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists against being recorded as Hindus, and pointing to Hindu Mahasabha pressure

through ‘innumerable volunteers, enumerators and supervisors’ (Home Public F. No. 3/1/41; Home Public F. No. 45/55/31 on Sikhs protesting against the refusal of enumerators to record them as Sikhs, NAI). Petitions signed by Jain associations all over the country noted that the community was in danger of being assimilated by Hindus owing to their illiteracy, and the fact that they were scattered. “The column is quite necessary to study the problems of the community and also to keep alive the consciousness of its being an independent community.” (File No. 45/13/1930 on Jains protesting Hindu Mahasabha, NAI). There could be similar reasons why an oppressed caste which has developed its own counter culture would want to maintain the consciousness of itself as separate (see Omvedt, 1998).

In Punjab, Dalit castes like the Chuhars complained of pressure to be recorded as Sikhs or Hindus by Sikh and Hindu enumerators and demanded that their religion be entered as Adh Dharm. The proposal was initially opposed by Hutton on the grounds that since they owed their disability precisely to the fact that they were Hindus, they should be returned as Hindus, thus revealing a view of caste as intrinsically bound up with purity and pollution rather than economic standing (Home Public 45/56/30, NA). The same concept of caste appears to be operative in the current policy denying reservations to Dalits of other religions, e.g. Dalit Christians.

In short, the census of 1931 and 1941, in the years before partition and independence had been dragged into disputes between communal forces who wanted to expand their own numbers at the expense of others. In the process, the distinct religion and culture of adivasis and other groups like the Jains and Sikhs was under threat.

C) Complaints against Enumerators: In the run up to both the 1931 and 1941 census and immediately after, there were several complaints against enumerator bias in inflating the numbers of one or the other community. This was, by far, the largest and potentially most violent issue around which mobilisation took place.

A report in the *Inquilab*, Lahore of 8th March, 1931 stated that many Muslims were left out of the census enumeration and even for those enumerated, returns had been destroyed. In Moga, many Muslim streets were left out, especially surrounding the Jama Masjid, despite the fact that people stayed up till midnight waiting for the enumerator. (Till 1941, the census enumeration took place on a single night, one specially chosen for its full moon and of any major fairs or festivals that might take people out of their homes). Sweepers and Chamars had also been returned as Hindus and Sikhs while those who called themselves Adh Dharmis had been mistreated. A letter from the Hindu Census Committee, Ludhiana protested against the ‘irregular’ conduct of the census by a census operation overwhelmingly packed with Muslims, which resulted in decreasing the number of Hindus and offered to pay for a fresh census (ibid).

Intelligence Bureau reports for February and March 1941 show increasing agitation over the issue. Apparently, in Bengal at a secret meeting of the Muslim Central Census Board on February 8th, it was decided to hold a Census week for propaganda purposes. In the Punjab, there was a report on the attempt to burn down a gurudwara in a village in Gujranwala, “inspired by revenge on the part of Muslims against the Hindus and Sikhs who accused the Muslim patwari of bias in enumeration.” In several parts of Lahore, there

was no enumeration at all. (Extract from the Intelligence Bureau's Daily Summary of Information, February 3, 1941; Report on the situation in Punjab for the first half of March 1941; CIO Lahore's Daily Report, 3 March 1941, all in Home Public F. No. 45/11/41, NAI.) The Muslim League complained that the Hindu Mahasabha had been successful in influencing the census at least to some degree in Bengal, as shown by a statement issued by the All Bengal Hindu Mahasabha Census Board on 5th March 1941 which thanked "the thousands of Enumerators, Supervisors and Voluntary Census Workers who ungrudgingly offered their services and worked hard day and night for the enumeration of the Hindu strength" (Home Public F. No. 45/11/41, NAI).

One of the demands made in deputation to the Home Member, Reginald Maxwell, by M.S. Aney and Bhai Parmanand was that Hindu and Muslim enumerators have their work checked by supervisors of the opposite religion (Home Public F. No. 45/39/40, NAI). In Bengal, a public meeting of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party resolved that only joint enumerators would inspire confidence in the public, a demand with which the government of Bengal under the Muslim League also concurred (Home Public F. No. 45/40/40, NAI).

The proposal for outside checking and joint enumerators was shot down by Yeatts on both administrative grounds (there were not enough enumerators of both religions, there was no machinery for settling disputes between them etc.) and grounds of principle. (Home Public F. No. 45/40/40, Note by Yeatts on Bengal letter, 21.12.1940). Defending the impartiality of the enumerators and pointing out that the success of the census depended on the respondents, he added "the alternative to distrusting the citizens of Bengal as their government do, is not to make a farce of the whole thing, but to abandon it altogether, to say to the world 'Bengal citizens cannot be trusted therefore we are having no census.'" In both 1931 and 1941, without giving in to demands for outside interference in the census, the Census authorities did try to ensure that as far as possible the enumerators were from the same community as the bulk of those they enumerated, while for special cases, e.g. Assam, Bengal and Punjab, independent enumerators and Census Superintendents were preferred. Europeans were inevitably seen as the best choice for the latter.

Language was yet another issue, for example in Ganjam in 1931, where tension over the percentages of Oriya and Telugu speakers was high. There were petitions by different groups asking to be recognised either as Oriyas or Telugus (Home Public F. No. 45/56/31; F. No. 171/31; F. No. 328/31; F. 45/66/31, NAI). One Rao Sahib N. Ramamurthi, President of the Ganjam Defence League pointed out that the 1901 census had yielded an exceptionally high percentage of Oriya speakers, possibly because the enumerators were mostly Oriya and had entered as Oriya speakers all those who answered questions in Oriya, coupled with the fact that school fees for Oriyas were about half what they were for Telugus and others. But here too, a request for inspection of returns by outsiders was refused, while that of appointing a neutral officer acceded to (Home Public F. No. 1/12/31, NAI).

To summarise, the use of cultural classifications by which to measure the population has been subtly dangerous and consequently the census has been a source of intense politicking, often with negative effects. Although only caste has been singled out as having negative consequences for democracy and therefore not counted, as we have seen above, religious returns have

been equally controversial. In the 2001 census, once again there was controversy in Jharkhand, with the RSS demanding that adivasis be counted as Hindus and adivasi leaders asking for their own religion to be recognised (sarna dharm). The 2001 census data on religion, showing high Muslim growth rates compared to Hindu ones, was picked up by the RSS to claim that Muslims were growing at the expense of Hindus. The figures were eventually found to be wrong, not having taken into account the lack of earlier censuses in Jammu and Kashmir and Assam.

Reflection and Action 8.1

Inclusion of caste as a category in the census fostered casteist identity among the people. Discuss

8.4 The Impact of the Census on a Sociological Understanding of Caste

Historically, anthropology and demography have been closely intertwined. As Cohn noted, “It would not be an exaggeration to say that down until 1950 scholars’ and scientists views’ on the nature, structure and functioning of the Indian caste system were shaped mainly by the data and conceptions growing out of the census operations.” In large part, this was due to the fact that most of the works on the caste system from 1880 to 1950 were written by officials who had at some point been census superintendents, either for India or for a province (Cohn, 1990: 242). The census itself provided an opportunity for state funded research on ethnological data, at a time when there were few opportunities for professional anthropologists (see Padmanabha, 1978 for a list of anthropological studies conducted as part of the census, including monographs on particular castes and tribes, surveys of fairs and festivals, linguistics studies, and socio-economic surveys of villages and urban areas). Yet, by 1941, the Census Commissioner was advocating the separation of anthropology from the census, to the mutual advantage of both: “there exists a widespread impression that the main object of the Indian census is anthropological....One unfortunate result of this excessive association of the Census with anthropology was to obscure the basic importance of the country-wide determination which so far the census was the only means of securing.....It must also have affected adversely the proper consideration and financing of anthropological work in India. Such work should be carried out year in and year out and not forced into the constructed periods of a ten year convulsion” (Census of India, Yeatts, 1941, Vol I, Part I: 2).

One outcome of the census need for identifiable criteria, at both the basic level and larger aggregations was, as Pant puts it, a ‘substantialisation of caste’: a caste became a unit “made up of a name, a number of members, physical characteristics, cultural practices, territory occupied, in short, by the sum of all the information about a social group that had been collected over a number of surveys, and from a variety of respondents, whose social points of view were not necessarily common” (Pant, 1987: 161). The effect of this on the bulk of studies of caste has been unmistakable, with considerable debate on the origins of the caste system (race, occupation, cultural ecological explanations); the defining characteristics of castes (e.g. endogamy, restrictions on commensality); the effective unit of caste (sub-caste, caste-cluster, varna); the principles underlying caste ranking (purity-pollution, interactional); mobility within and against the caste system (the

concepts of Sanskritisation, dominant caste emulation, Westernisation, affirming Indic values etc.); whether caste is specific to India or whether it is a limited form of stratification; and whether resistance to caste can only take place within its own categories or can take place against the caste system as a whole. In all these, existing castes are taken as given units. What we need instead are studies that examine the way caste as a system (and the composition of individual castes) changes in response to wider political, economic and historical developments.

Reflection and Action 8.2

Is caste a relevant sociological category in the census operations? Discuss

8.5 The Debate over Inclusion of Caste in the Census

Like all administrative measures, a caste enumeration is seen as having advantages and disadvantages for different groups of people. Opponents of caste enumeration point to the past experience of mobilisation over caste in the census and the current context of caste antagonisms, to argue that a fresh enumeration would lead to fresh mobilisation and a further hardening of caste identities (Srinivas, 1998, Beteille, 1998). Such mobilisation, it is also argued, would spoil the quality of data. Indeed, the data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes which the census collects is already subject to political interference. Singh (1992: 25) notes that there are about a thousand cases pending in courts filed by communities keen to get SC or ST status to avail of reservations. In other arenas, however, they lay claim to higher ritual status (see also Kulkarni, 1991; Roy Burman, 1998 on fraudulent returns in the context of reservations). Some sociologists have also argued that caste data is particularly difficult to collect given the multiplicity of names and the contextual manner in which terms are used, and that this problem has been exacerbated with all the changes that have taken place due to migration, modern employment practices, inter-caste marriages etc. (A.M. Shah, 1998; G. Shah, 1998). The nation as a whole would thus lose out in terms of cost incurred, the rise in social conflict and the availability of seeming scientific but in fact unreliable data.

Supporters of caste enumeration argue that the refusal to measure caste is a classic case of upper-caste interests masquerading as the national or universal interest. Even in 1948 when a comprehensive caste return were abandoned, there were some dissenting voices. For instance, P. S. Deshmukh argued, “it is too early to expect that people will agree to the abolition of caste. These very people now wish to continue their exploitation in the name of no-caste. Census operations are very important and for all people they serve as an excellent index to ascertain the progress they have made from time to time” (quoted in Maheshwari, 1986: 142).

The major demand for a caste census has come from Backward Classes Commissions, troubled by the lack of data with which to carry out their tasks. Post independence, the term ‘Other Backward Classes (OBCs)’ has become popular and is taken to refer to those groups which are not scheduled castes or tribes, but which are still seen to suffer from ‘social and educational backwardness’. Although the Constitution uses the term ‘classes’, this has generally been understood to mean certain castes (Galanter 1984: 166). In many ways the dilemma over whether or not to have caste returns in the census is reflected in parallel debates on how to define backwardness - solely in terms of caste or on some economic criteria (see Galanter, 1984: 172 - 177)

For instance, the chairman of the 1st Backward Classes Commission which identified backward classes by caste later rejected its recommendations, arguing that the caste test of backwardness was inimical to the creation of a casteless society, and recommending in its place residential, economic, education and cultural criteria of backwardness (Galanter, 1984: 172).

The Backward Classes Commissions are required to identify lists of backward classes for their states, in order to implement reservation in jobs and educational institutions and welfare schemes (scholarships etc.). In the absence of census data, the Commissions have extrapolated from 1931 census data. Several of them have also conducted their own sample surveys, collected data from educational institutions and government offices, and invited submissions by individuals and groups (see the range of data used by the Third Backward Classes Commission in Karnataka, cited in Sundar 1999: 123, fn 55). While much of this secondary data would continue to be needed, the task would be made much easier with updated census data. Census data, it is argued, would be useful in drawing up fresh lists of OBCs, for admitting new castes into the list and graduating others out. Further, it might enable proportional representation for disadvantaged castes within the reservation quota (discussion quoted in Deshpande and Sundar 1998: 2158). Graduation out of a beneficiary list, however, is politically very difficult and almost no state government has been successful in practice. The losers in this process tend to be the smaller castes without much political clout (see Bayly, 1999: 293).

Supporters of caste enumeration also claim that it would be useful in planning. To target concentrations of backward groups, one would need block level or district level data, since this is the level at which decisions about locating schools or primary health centres is made. However, again there is a doubtful link between the existence of such data and the actual services provided. While there are few studies of how local governments work, the studies available suggest that the placing of schools is decided by local powerful groups and not need. P. Sainath, for example, has shown how upper castes always make sure the village school is situated in one of their hamlets, since that ensures their control over polling (Sainath, 1998). Similarly, the absence of facilities in tribal areas despite the data on Scheduled Tribes being available suggests that it is not lack of data which must be blamed, but other factors.

On the other hand, caste census data can play a useful role in creating public awareness and opinion about the systematic lack of facilities for certain groups. While one doesn't need to know the caste of a citizen, or the caste layout of a village in order to make sure that everyone is provided with basic services, in a situation where the government has claimed to have made universal provision, this data can be useful. If, despite the presence of primary schools in every village, census data show that certain castes are getting no education, this is cause for concern, and possible mobilisation.

While opponents of caste enumeration emphasise its role in fomenting mobilisation and hardening identities, supporters of caste enumeration portray it as a move to challenge the status quo by highlighting inequality and eventually eliminating caste (see Deshpande, 1998; Vijayanunni, 1999; see also the very similar arguments in the US and UK contexts over counting race and ethnicity in the census, cited in Sundar 1999: 100-102). While opponents of caste enumeration show unease with unmanageable public action, supporters display a rosy and naive view of the government and the use it

makes of data. If census enumeration is to help at all in overturning caste, it will be because of public mobilisation using the data thrown up, and not because of the state. Rather than fearing mobilisation per se, one's concern should be over what forms it takes. The challenge is really to ensure that such data are not manipulated by purely casteist parties or used to ghettoise the polity.

Larger version of the material contained in this unit is presented in the article, 'The Indian Census: Identity and Inequality' by Nandini Sundar, 1999.

Reflection and Action 8.3

Do you think caste should be included in the census? If so, why? If not, why?

8.6 Conclusion

There is no denying that the apparently simple enterprise of counting the characteristics of the Indian population undertaken by the British officials for convenience in administration emerged as a powerful tool in political, cultural and religious battles.. Conducting a census is a political act in which sensitive information that has political repercussions is taken down. The census data have been put to many uses. The data have been used for drawing comparisons between different communities and religious groups. The census data on caste has immense potential to be analysed in order to understand and address socio-economic problems, as well as to create divisiveness between communities. The task before social scientists is to make use of data appropriately.

8.7 Further Reading

Appadurai, Arjun, 1993, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination,' in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, ed, C. A. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer. University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia

Bayly, Susan, 1999, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the 18th Century to the Modern Age*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Cohn, Bernard, 1990, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia,' in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. Oxford University Press: Delhi

Dirks, Nicholas, 1993, *The Hollow Crown*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor
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Unit 9

The Household and the Family

Contents

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Meaning of the Terms : Family and Household
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Learning Objectives

Unit 9 aims to look at the family in India as an institution and to see what sociological research has to offer in this regard. Going through the unit should enable you to:

- ≈ define the family and learn of the variations in family types, structure and composition;
- ≈ distinguish between family and household;
- ≈ understand the joint and nuclear forms of family and question if these are essentially evolutionary forms (i.e. examine the modernization thesis with the family as a case);
- ≈ to find out the distinction between the family in scriptural texts and empirical studies;
- ≈ learn the process of phases of household development in relation to joint and nuclear family types;
- ≈ study the functional, conflict, power and cultural dimensions of the family;
- ≈ discuss the changes in the family in contemporary India;
- ≈ ask if there is an alternative to the family as an institution; and
- ≈ to see that family studies have commonly focused on the upper caste Hindu family in India and identify a paucity of research on the family among other groups.

9.1 Introduction

The family is a unique institution in that it is both a private and a visibly public institution at the same time. It oscillates between the most intimate to the most public in its various contexts. The family is near universal as well. All of us for most of the time live in families. The very visible and commonplace presence of the family has perhaps lent itself to the impression that the sociology of the family is a soft subject. Or it could be the other way round, in that it is too intimate and private to be brought up to the level of sociological analysis. Notwithstanding either of the possibilities, Uberoi thinks that being commonplace enables everyone to have an opinion on the family, thus inhibiting its consideration seriously. She also points to the intrusive fears that make the family too sensitive to critical inquiry, “It

is as though critical interrogation of the family might constitute an intrusion into that private domain where the nation's most cherished cultural values are nurtured and reproduced, as though the very fabric of society would be undone if the family were in any way questioned or reshaped" (1993: 1-2).

Social philosophers have all through history, though at long intervals, reflected and commented upon the family. The family constituted an important area of study in Sociology in its early infancy. The high status accorded to the family in early Christianity might have influenced the genre of family studies in that period. This continued to be the case until the early 60s of the 20th century. In the Indian context too, family studies have been through ups and downs in popularity and focus. The family has remained a central social institution. However, it has, of late, received somewhat inadequate attention in comparison with the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Given the universality of prevalence of marriage in India, the study of the family has been given somewhat less attention in the last two decades of the 20th century.

The study of the family in Anthropology also had its ups and downs. Being intertwined with marriage and kinship, the institutions that structure rules and behaviour regarding relationships both by descent and alliance, gained predominance over the study of the family (see Uberoi 1993 for elaboration). We do know that these principles and rules routinely get enacted out of the family and the household. Somehow this dimension of the family happened to be glossed over despite Fortes' (1958) view that the domestic group is the workshop for kinship and marriage. It is worth serious consideration that the family is, to use Goffman's (1958) dramaturgical notion, both the back stage and the front stage of a very substantial part of people's behaviour throughout their lives. The family as an omnipresent institution stages and witnesses the drama of life as it unfolds throughout people's lives. Such an approach to the family is less likely to fall under the clearly chartable principles of kinship that Anthropology found more fascinating to study. It largely dealt with neater categories than the existential messiness that the family offered (see Simpson 1994 for analysis of the messiness of the contemporary British family).

The numerous variations in the dynamics of everyday behaviour of the family did not lend itself easily into the fold of certain structural principles. The family was thus best left marginalised from conventional structural Anthropology. Nevertheless, it is a platform from which most of the structural principles of sexuality and relations of reciprocity, hierarchy and exchange are enacted, regulated and reproduced.

Let us halt a bit here and see what is meant by the term family.

9.2 Meaning of the Terms : Family and Household

The concept, family, broadly refers to the primary group comprising husband-wife unit (parents) and their children. This definition keeps three types of ties in mind. The ties are: of marriage between the spouses, (i.e. the parents) and of siblingship between children. The two ties are connected through the genealogical one between parents and their children. (For details on the meaning of family you may see Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Programme.) We shall see below that some families comprise persons descended from a common male parent, while in others from a common female parent. For example a couple, their married sons and latter's' wives

and children make the primary group, stated at the outset of this section as a family, a somewhat larger one. Thus a family may be large or small depending on the prevailing principles of organisation of descent relations between the dependents of married persons. Thus, the family is based on the principles of kinship whose members usually share a common residence. They reside in a house/homestead. This residential unit is called the household. The members of a household have a set of relational ties amongst them. These ties are linked with the statuses held and the corroborating role complexes members of the family are expected to constitute. The household (*ghar*) is a residential and domestic unit composed of one or more persons living under the same roof and eating food cooked in the same kitchen (hearth/*chulah*). It may so happen that not all the members of a family live in the same household all the time. Geographically distanced homes may be occupied by a few of the members of a given family. These members then reside in two or more households but they consider themselves as belonging to the same family. The household is a commensal and co-resident group/ unit (with provision for the phenomenon of single person households). Thus kin and residence rules distinguish between family and household (see Shah 1973, page 3 for an elaboration of the concepts and to see how the household is one of the several dimensions of the family).

Kolenda (1998) is another sociologist who has consistently worked towards clarifying the conceptual issues about family and household. She has proposed the 12 type classificatory scheme in her comparative study of the Indian joint family based on 26 post-1949 ethnographic studies and household censuses (Kolenda 1968). These classes of obtained household compositions take the reader beyond the joint-nuclear or extended-elementary types of families. This scheme does not obscure the phenomenon as a simple joint versus nuclear family one does. The 12 type classes are as follows: 1) Nuclear Family, a couple with or without unmarried children; 2) Supplemented nuclear family; 3) Subnuclear family; 4) Single person household; 5) Supplemented subnuclear family; 6) Collateral joint family; 7) Supplemented collateral joint family; 8) Lineal joint family; 9) Supplemented lineal joint family; 10) Lineal-collateral joint family; 11) Supplemented lineal collateral joint family; and 12) other, a residual class (See Shah 1973: 220-227 for a critical appreciation of Kolenda's classification scheme). See Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Sociology Programme to clarify how these classes of households are useful in the understanding the continuum between variations of joint and nuclear family forms over a life cycle.

Reflection and Action 9.1

- 1) See Table 3 in the book by A.M. Shah (1973) on page 13 for household size in 1951 in village and town areas in Gujarat (India) if possible. Take ten houses on a street each in a nearby village and/or town and make a table of household size and compare the Indian census figures for 1951 with your own figures. Compare the 1991 and 2001 census figures for rural and urban India and your state with those given in Shah.
- 2) See Table 17 in Shah (1973) for working out the basis of composition of households. Now prepare a basis for such a composition for the data you have gathered from the twenty households in rural and urban surroundings.

Discuss the difference in figures and patterns of households at your study/ Counselling Centre.

9.3 Joint and Nuclear Family in India

In the two most significant Hindu epics, 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharat', the central families are large joint families. Dashrath's sons in 'Ramayana' and Dhritrashtra's and Pandu's in 'Mahabharata' live together along with their wives for a good part of their lives. Even when separated by force of circumstance, the jointness of concern, respect for togetherness and emotional bonding is visibly a desirable feature of the family in the epics. The epics hold a great deal of influence on the Hindus in India and a large joint family with filial (father-son relationship) piety is considered the ideal. These families are cited as examples to emulate whenever any threat to the family unity is perceived or if the younger generation is to be reminded of norms of filial piety. The husband-wife couple of Ram and Sita of Ramayan is the ideal for others to emulate as filial ties are underscored over conjugal ties in their life.

The two kinship links between i) parent-child and ii) siblings are found to exist in reality in various permutations and combinations. In the manner of their organisation, these links enable the separation between nuclear/elementary and joint/extended families. A nuclear family is defined as a group consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. When there are additional relatives to any of the relations in the nuclear family it turns into a joint one. Thus a joint family is a nuclear family plus all kin belonging to the side of husband and /or wife living in one homestead. The term joint and extended are used interchangeably in Sociology/Social Anthropology. Such a family is a combination of more than one nuclear family based on an extension of the parent-child relationship. By implication it may also include an expansion of the number of siblings of a certain sex and their spouses and children. When descent is traced through the male line, the extended/joint family is based on the extension between father-son relationship. On the other hand, an extension based on mother-daughter relationship forms a matrilineal extended/joint family. A horizontally extended family between brothers, their wives and children is called fraternal or collateral family (see Kapadia's essay in Patel 2005 for illustrations of lineally/vertically and laterally/horizontally extended families).

The ideal Hindu joint family consists of a man, his wife and their adult sons, their wives and children, and the younger unmarried children of the parental couple. This is called a patrilineal, parivirilocal (the newly married couple taking residence in the husband's father's home) family. The oldest male heads the family and authority is hierarchically ordered along the lines of age and sex. In such a family, conjugal ties are considered subordinate to filial and fraternal (relationship between brothers) ties. Members of the family are related by kinship bonds lineally or collaterally or both. As elaborated in Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Programme, a joint family is seen by the number of generations present, ideally three or four generational family (Desai 1964, Madan 1965). The joint family holds property in common. However, not all members have the same right over the family property. Gore (1968) defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependents. Thus some members do not constitute coparceners even if they are members of the family, and have a right of residence and use of family resources.

We shall see the details of property rights (in both schools of law— Dayabhaga, adopted in Bengal and Assam, and Mitakshara, adopted in most other parts

of India) to different members of the family when we deal with the feminist perspective.

9.4 Views on the Family in India

Research on the family in India has adopted different approaches. Like any knowledge on a cultural reality, family research has also been conducted from different points of view. You will see in Unit 12 of this Block that kinship has been approached differently in Indological studies than in empirical sociological and social anthropological research. Similarly, family in India has been studied through the Indological and the empirical approaches. We shall now examine these.

a) The Textual View

The family in Hindu thought is derived from the idea of *pitri rin*, i.e. ancestral indebtedness. Every man has to repay the debt of his ancestors (the other two being of the teacher and gods) through procreation. The birth of a child, especially a son was not only a reason for being, but also being free of ancestral debt. Raising the next generation, i.e. sons, to adulthood ensures one's way to heaven. The son's privilege and obligation to light the funeral pyre and observe certain death rituals symbolises this indebtedness and the way out of it. Thus the Hindu family was defined as the closest group bound by mutual ties of giving and receiving the funeral oblation (a person and his three immediate ancestors). The family was a three or four generation group depending on how and whom you count in or out. *Shradha* and property were linked in the notion of the family. The text-based dimension of the Hindu family is one of a property holding and *shradha* performing unit.

The Hindu family became coterminous with the Indian joint family through the engagement of British colonial administration with indigenous systems of kinship and marriage as reflected through the Hindu sacred texts, the 'Dharmshastra' (see Kane 1930-62). Maine (1972) projected the Indian joint family as a surviving example of the ancient form of human family. He had discerned the outlines of the ancient family in the legal system in ancient Rome and in the Celtic and Slavic survivals of earlier forms of social organisation. To Maine, this patriarchal family worked as a corporation, with its members as its trustees. Many early Indian sociologists were trained in the Indological approach. Prabhu (1955[1940]) described the patriarchal form of joint family as the family form of all Hindus, rich, poor, urban and village folk. Ghurye (1955) claimed an Indo-European pedigree for the Indian joint family. The Hindu family had for long found itself analysed, commented upon and prescribed as the ideal norm. The upper caste and upper class Indians derived their family morality and norms from liturgical texts and this became an ideal for other castes to emulate, in the process of their Sanskritisation, to use Srinivas' concept. The ideological amalgam was further complicated by the British legal reinterpretation of liturgical concepts. "The hereditary literati had their own traditions, attitudes, biases, and interests which influenced their comments and interpretations. As if this was not sufficiently complicated, during the British rule certain ideas and myths regarding the Indian family organisation obtained wide currency through the British law courts and judges, and the new class of lawyers" (Srinivas's Foreword in Shah 1973: vii).

Historians as well as sociologists had used textual (literary, sacerdotal and legal) sources to comment on social institutions, including the family (see

Unit 12 of this block). Karve (1953) in her extensive survey of the Indian kinship system with kinship vocabularies had identified four main types of kinship organisation in India. Karve's study brought out the Dravidian kinship system and its family form as distinct from the form in most parts of India. It is through the Indological approach that the Hindu joint family came to be considered as the ideal and often the real family in India (See Uberoi 2000 for an elaboration of the Indological approach to family studies).

Whether it is the Ramayana family or the upper caste and class Hindu family, the large joint family is not the universal form of family in India, both at present and in the recorded past. It may be reiterated that the joint and the nuclear types of the family are Indological constructs. The family as obtained in the field through empirical social anthropological and sociological studies is much more varied rather than the ideal joint family.

b) The Field View

Goody's (1962) influence took some time to show itself in Indian family studies. However, empirical study of the family was still under the strong influence of the basic difference between the oriental and the occidental family types, and this type-cast remained a given fact as though the empirical reality had to be pigeonholed into either of the compartments. Of course, the terms 'domestic group' as well as 'household' provided a processual view of the family, which brought to attention the lived reality of family closer to sociological scrutiny. Though Rivers (1906) had given the lead for providing empirical cases and actual figures through the genealogical method, the jural and textual influence continued its preponderance for nearly half a century, in the family studies in India. The discourse on the native category of the family was influenced by colonial administration and Anthropology.

Box 9.1 : Nuclear and Joint Family

Although for at least three decades since the 1950s, Sociology and Social Anthropology both in the West and in India have provided a great deal of rigorous research on the family and its various dimensions and aspects, it is a sad state that many social science research students in India today have to ask their respondents if theirs is a nuclear or a joint family. People's terms may vary. Their terms range from being together to being separated, with reference to the ego's (male's in patrilineal society) residence in relation to other members of the family and the household. While the sociologist's categorisation deals with the structure of residence derived from its composition, people's categorisation is based on the context of the ego's residence vis-a-vis other household and/or family members. A household in itself is neither joint nor nuclear, but becomes either of these by virtue of its being under progression and regression in a developmental process. For example, a married son's moving out of his father's house in patrilineal society makes the son's house a nuclear one, or rather a separate one. This act may or may not simultaneously make his father's household a nuclear one. This dimension of behaviour projecting the residents as living together or as separate (in joint or nuclear households) has to be investigated further. It is here that the family is seen not just as a noun but as an adjective constituting actors and agents.

The family received a great deal of interest during the first few decades of the emergence of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. In her comprehensive survey Dube (1974) describes the overwhelming interest in

family studies as being next only to those in caste. It is an interesting coincidence and a case for comparative study that with India's political independence and following the formation of the Indian Sociological Society, the sociological study of the family experienced a watershed from, what Srinivas calls, the book view to the field view. Almost simultaneously came up the Western field-based anthropological and sociological studies (Goody 1958, Goode 1963).

These studies provided a break from the studies of the Indological school based on legal and liturgical arguments. A shift occurred from the textual Indology to the contextual in the study of the family in India. Sociologists and social anthropologists began to study the various extant forms and structures of the family as they existed in reality rather than the erstwhile text-based dimension of the family as a property-holding and *shradha*-performing unit. The effect of liturgical and legal texts continued to linger in studies of the joint family and the changes therein. The overlap of the ideal, normative and behavioural with that of value and fact in family studies continued until the concept of the household as a heuristic device seemed to rescue family sociology from the confusion (Shah 1973). The overwhelming influence of the Hindu, upper caste, North Indian ideal of the family was assumed, somewhat erroneously, as the all India Hindu and Indian family, notwithstanding the fairly early studies among non-Hindu South Indian communities in India by Kapadia (1958) and Dube (1969).

c) Process View: Phases of Household Development

We have earlier mentioned the continuum between nuclear and joint family as one changes into another over time. In this way of studying the family, it is clear that the family is not a static institution. It goes through a developmental cycle. This cycle interrelates the nuclear and the joint families with each other. The structure of a family changes over time with changes in its size, composition and the status and roles of its members. Thus a family is not likely to always remain nuclear, nor does a family always remain joint. Similarly, not all nuclear families are identical nor are all joint families so. At any given point in time, a nuclear family may have one or more persons. When it turns into a joint one it may have at least two and usually many more members. You have already seen the 12 classes Kolenda (1998) found in the 26 studies she analysed. This process of the developmental cycle has been improvised by Shah's (1973) study of the household and its developmental phases. A household may experience progression and/or regression or both on the basis of birth, adoption and in- and out-marriage, and death, divorce and separation of members over a period of time. A household in itself is neither joint nor nuclear, but becomes either of these by virtue of its being under progression and regression in the process of its developmental phases. For example, a married son's moving out of his father's house in a patrilineal society makes the son's house a nuclear one, or rather a separate one. This act may or may not simultaneously make his father's household a nuclear one. Thus at any given time the family forms in a society are likely to vary from a single member to a large group residing together. Thus the term household is used for the residential grouping and family for the group related through kinship, emotional, ritual and legal dimensions. Thus Shah (1973) uses the terms simple and complex for the household rather than joint or nuclear.

Each person in a household is involved in a complex pattern of behaviour with every other member. Life in a household is marked by proper code of

conduct for each member. To analyse a household in its entirety, all the relatives in a household need to be taken into account. 'The compositional types are not discrete and haphazard but are interrelated in a developmental process. The pattern of the developmental process in each society is affected by three major factors. The first is the demographic factor, which not only includes the phenomena of birth, adulthood and death but also the sex and number of members. While these phenomena are demographic in origin, they are social in operation. The second factor is the series of explicitly stated norms regarding the residence of various relatives in a household. The third is the pattern of interpersonal relations in a household, largely dependent on the norms or codes of proper conduct attached to kinship relationships in the household' (Shah 1973: 81-81). When a simple household becomes a complex one through addition of other family members (by birth or marriage) the process is called fusion. Contrariwise, when members are lost (by birth, out-marriage, migration) the household is said to undergo fission. A household goes through the process of fusion and fission and accretion and attrition and in its wake turning itself into simple and complex one. Each attrition may or may not change the household and the family into a nuclear or a joint one.

Reflection and Action 9.2

We have seen above that a family does not remain static in its size, composition and structure. In fact, it goes through phases of development which may be progressive as well as regressive. The concept of household and its developmental phases, therefore, is of heuristic value in research.

Prepare a chart of a your family tree with the help of your parents and/or grand parents for upto at least four generations. I may refer you to units 8 and 9 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme and Unit 12 of this Block to make the chart. Mark the time when your family was nuclear and when it became a joint one over the entire period you have covered in the chart. Point out if some members/sections of the family reside/d in separate houses but remained joint in property, rituals, pollution, sentiments etc.

Discuss at your study centre, how different households of your family were set up, and how these were composed of varying forms of family class types at different periods. This exercise should enable you to see that classifying households simply as nuclear and joint families hide the actual developmental phases that families go through over time. Families experience fission and fusion and this is visible through the households in which the family members reside. This should enable an understanding of the significance of kinship ties and principles in family and household organisation. Discuss the usefulness of the concept of household in empirical research on the family with your Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

The period in Indian Sociology that marked a shift from the book-view to the field-view coincided with the influence of the idea of modernisation and development. Bombay was assumed, as it were, to be the pinnacle of industrialisation and modernisation, and the teaching community the leading light. Therefore, the family in Bombay, might have been assumed to provide evidence of the influence of modernisation and industrialisation on the family. As will be evident from the essays in Patel (2005), the Indian family received maximum attention in Maharashtra and Gujarat and much less in other parts of India, especially South India by Sociologists in India.

9.5 The Myth of Disintegration of the Joint Family

Sociology shared with Social Anthropology the unilinear evolutionary path that the family was to take over time. Maine's evolutionary path in his *Ancient Law* (1861) on the origin and nature of human society was summed up in the famous shift from status to contract. For Maine, the movement from status to contract might be visualised through the movement in the institution of marriage centred on family and kin (i.e. status orientation) to individual choice (i.e. contract orientation). The ensuing family eventually became a nuclear one with a strong conjugal orientation like the Christian nuclear family. He found in the Indian joint family the earliest form of the patriarchal family. Bachofen and Engels disagreed with Maine's views in a certain way as their ancient family was matriarchal. Engels was influenced by Morgan's (1877) conjecture of the latter day patriarchal family formation. He is well-known for attributing the woman's historic fall from grace with the formation of the institution of private property and the patriarchal monogamous family. Yet they all remained evolutionary in their perspective regarding the institution of the family (for related elaboration, see Zimmerman's essay in Patel (2005)).

Even though the charge of assumed evolutionist perspective was to be dismissed, there is another analytical trend that strengthens the thesis of the disintegration of the joint family. The empirical data on post-independent India were being unquestioningly contrasted with the ideal and textual image of the three or four-generational patrilineal Hindu joint family. A historical analysis of the family can provide interpretations of the contemporary family both of its own gradual transformation and the all round transformation experienced by the society as a whole.

Serious empirical studies of the family dealt with conceptual and analytical categories more carefully and raised issues like jointness and its meaning and variations in its various contexts. The question of the meaning of jointness and its implications was put under critical scrutiny. Two major contemporary influences made a significant impact not only on the field view of the family but also on how family studies in India were to unfold over the following decades. First, by the turn of the 20th century, population censuses were administered in many western countries and their colonies. The Indian census data on the household size revealed that the Indian household was decreasing in size compared to the textual Indological image of the family. It was much smaller than the three-generational joint residential unit it was understood to be. Secondly, this datum along with the data on the disintegrating European family was interpreted with the evolutionary perspective on social institutions including that of the family. The view was further substantiated with the census data obtained in India. To the evolutionists and Euro-centrists, the census data and inferences on the Indian family were evidence of all roads leading to Rome, i.e. monogamy and the nuclear family were the final destination. The assumed evolutionary path of the gradual reduction in the size of the family is an erroneous one. Laslett and Wall (1972) highlight the small size of the European family in the past substantiated by historical demographers. Historical studies both of the European and the Asian family have challenged the unilinear assumption of the reducing size and the changing structure and content of the family (See Wilk and Netting 1984 and Yanagisako 1979). The well known Parsonian thesis of the fit between the nuclear family and the American industrial society which other societies would eventually follow was not only an evolutionary thesis but was also delegitimising of

other family patterns. See Uberoi's (2000: 7-13) perceptive appraisal of the modernisation thesis in this regard.

But historical analysis in a comparative framework is also possible without following the evolutionary perspective. Weber's (1975) *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* focussed centrally on the origins of modern society and conditions of its emergence rather than with a whole series of types of societies of which the modern was seen as but the latest. Closely related in some way, though not reiterating the unilinear evolutionary model of family change, was the assumption that the conjugal unity of the couple and their children with ever fewer kin ties provided the structural keystone of the system. Its intense concentration on the socialisation of children was associated with the advanced industrial society. This family was particularly compatible with the demands of the dominant economic order of the industrial society. The developing countries would also behave in ways compatible. This over-simplistic assumption was visible in the thesis of the joint family's disintegration. It was devoid of serious historical data and insightful analysis (see Desai's essays 2005). Even the large sized family with a set of kinsmen (though in reality servants were more common) that existed among the more affluent upper class in Europe was found to be erroneously assumed. The cosy family of mum-dad and the kids assumed by planners and policy makers had long been declared stereotypical than real. Laslett and Wall (1972) revealed it for the European family, especially in British society, on the basis of historical data. Anderson (1980) studies recent times (1961-71) in England and states that 40 per cent of the people at any given point of time lived in households that did not conform to this pattern. There is a danger in viewing quantitative data too superficially, i.e. to look at time series for a misleadingly short period of time or to contrast quantitative data against an ideal or normative practice as was done after the initial censuses in India regarding the household size and composition. Several sociologists, Desai (2005) and Shah (1973) in particular, had picked up debates with the census data and pointed out the flaws in the interpretation of concepts and data. Nevertheless, Shah (1999) finds a potential in census data despite its limitations.

Fitting in the nuclear family with industrialisation was not a straightforward thesis in terms of Indian data. Despite the family-household conceptual distinction, other dimensions remained to be understood. Singer's work (1968) on the adaptation to western values and ways in a neatly compartmentalised manner to suit the public domain without being allowed to permeate into and affect the private domain of industrialists in South India revealed the resilience of traditional family values and norms. Adapting to Western ways and yet supporting joint family and caste values was characteristic of Singer's Indian industrial family. Though Singer's work is not a direct response to the Parsonian fit between industrial society and the nuclear family, it makes a strong case for an Indian family's way of adaptation. On the other hand, the issue of jointness was delinked from the sole criterion of joint residence. Thus retaining the jointness of the family is possible without living jointly. Though nuclear residence is on the rise in what Beteille (1993) calls the service class in urban India, Sharma's (1986) and Vatuk's (1972) field studies in North India suggest a different picture. They find a branch of the joint family residing separately in the city and acting as a buffer for members of the joint family to join them for studies and urban jobs. The articles by Kaldate (1962), and Kapadia, Morrison, and the

deliberations at the symposium on caste and the joint family (2005) deal with the transition from the joint to the nuclear family.

The conceptual distinction between the kinship oriented family and the residence oriented household led to a great deal of analytical clarity in the understanding of the family both as a social ideal and a social fact. Shah (1998) has shown that the proportion of joint families has remained the same if not increased over the past several decades. Kolenda (1970) too reiterated the popularity of the prevalence of the joint family. To Shah (1973) the kinship dimension of the household pattern is important to make meaningful analysis of quantitative data. Norms and interpersonal relations are not to be left behind.

9.6 Types of Family Structure

We have already discussed the nuclear and joint types of families. From the empirical field studies in India (Shah 1973, Kolenda 1987 and essays in Patel 2005), we have learnt that families assume different class types of simple and nuclear households. Family structures based on the principle of descent distinguish between different types of families. Let us see the two main structural types of families.

i) The Patrilineal Family

The genealogical and siblingship links of kinship among a group of relatives in a family signals its structural formation. When the central kinship link in the organisation of a family is between father and son/s, the family is patrilineal. We have seen above that such a family could be nuclear and/or joint. A joint patrilineal family may be lineally or laterally joint. We have also seen how the patrilineal joint family has been assumed to be the typical Indian family. Most of the studies cited above in this Unit are studies of the patrilineal family.

ii) The Matrilineal Family

Now we shall see alternative family types which are not patrilineal in structure. A family composed of genealogical and sibling relations of kinship with primary focus on the mother-daughter bond and descent principle, is a matrilineal family. A matrilineal family too could be nuclear or joint and have varying household forms over its members' life-cycle.

The joint family in South India, particularly among the matrilineal Nayers, did not resemble the textual and scriptural family of the Indian liturgical texts. Not the whole of South India is matrilineal. Unlike the village, *gotra*, and *sapinda* exogamy in North India, the south Indian family formation is influenced by cross-cousin and uncle-neice marriages. Unlike the joint family of the Nambudiris (*illam*) based on patriliney, the Nayar family (*tarawad*) was based on matriliney. The patrilineal family in South India is different from that in North India in some respects. There are variations in family formation among the Nayers within Kerala, for instance, between South-West Kerala and Central and North Kerala. Malabar and Travancore differed in their practice of polyandry. Yet the institution of *tarawad* was strong. Dube's (1974) review gives an extensive coverage of the studies of matrilineal systems and families therein, both by Indian and non-Indian scholars. Sardamoni's recent book (1999) deals with Travancore, an area taken up by Puthenkalam (2005). Both have dealt with the *tarawad* as an intimately linked manifestation of the

central feature of matriliney which gives women certain entitlements, such as permanent rights to maintenance by and residence in their natal home (*tarawad*). The relatively greater autonomy of women in the *tarawad* is a reflection of both the principle of matriliney and the consequent *tarawad* formation. Polyandrous unions, visiting husbands, and ritually sanctioned Nambudiri husbands and children from these husbands, were typical features of the *tarawad*. The members of the *tarawad* ranged from 20 to 30 and more. This family system was rather complex and posed a certain difficulty in fitting with the family in patrilineal society.

Matriliney is not the mirror opposite of patriliney and thus the difficulty. Levi-Strauss (1971) considers the South Indian Nayar family as family at times, and does not view this grouping as the family at others. The matter is resolved when he sums up that the family is the emanation, on the social level, of those natural requirements without which there could be no society. Another difficulty is posed by the variation in the Indian family forms which did not easily match with the nuclear family of the industrial West. However, Puthenkalam (2005) gives a peep into the matrilineal joint family (*tarawad*), among the Nayars in Kerala. Nevertheless, the institution of *tarawad* gradually weakened, as Puthenkalam describes, during the colonial rule (for more on this transformation, see Saradamoni 1999). Whether the decline of the *tarawad* is a reflection of the disintegration of the matrilineal joint family is difficult to claim. It is not that the *illam* has replaced the *tarawad*. Nevertheless, in the process of disintegration of the *tarawad*, women's autonomy has been curtailed. The erosion of Nayar women's autonomy and entitlements raises a research question on the importance of materiality in kinship structures.

iii) Caste, Community and Family Structure

We have learnt earlier that the Indological approach had posited the patrilineal joint family prevalent among the higher castes as the ideal Indian family. This bias had generated a problem with regard to the family among the non-patrilineal as well as the non-Hindu communities in Indian society.

Chakravarty and Singh (1991) found a slightly higher proportion of nuclear over joint families for India as a whole. Of course, joint families are larger in size, the proportion of population residing in them is also larger. Based on the census data, Shah (1998) shows that the proportion of joint over nuclear households has not decreased over the decades. He suggests that increased life expectancy and pressures on urban living space are likely to increase joint living, while Visaria and Visaria (2003) estimate increased nuclear family living for similar reasons. However, it is clear that urbanization has not led to nuclearization of the family.

The evolutionary and Euro-centric bias was so strong that despite a lack of any conclusive evidence that the family in the past was a large joint one, Goode (1963) claimed so, and predicted that the family was moving forward to assume the form of the western family (see Uberoi 2000: 10-13 for a detailed discussion on Goode's analysis).

We are now clear that the patrilineal Hindu joint family is considered an ideal by most Hindus. But geographical mobility, among other factors, has increased various forms of household composition, and not necessarily just nuclear family households. Shah (1973) describes migrants and their residential

arrangements. Sharma (1986) and Vatuk (1972) respectively discuss the strategy of rural families in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh where a part of the rural family moves to an urban area to access urban resources for the family's upward mobility through jobs, education etc. The rural families in both the studies make residential arrangements in urban areas to maximise the family's advantages through both rural and urban households and yet do not deviate from the joint family norm. By practising the dual residence pattern (rural and urban household), such a family enhances its economic, social, cultural as well as symbolic capital.

Lower caste Hindus are found (Cohn 1955, CSWI 1974, Shah 1998, Kolenda 1987) not following the norm of joint family. This should not mean that they do not consider the joint family as an ideal. Cohn (1955) delineates the factors responsible for the absence of joint families among the Chamars of Senapur. You are referred to unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme for the details. It is not sure if the lower castes also do not consider joint family as the ideal family. Careful research is needed to explore the family among the lower castes. Similarly, the family among tribals, the ideal, the norm and the actual, needs to be studied for better information. Though there is at least some research on the Muslim family (Ahmad 1976), there is a paucity of data on the family in the non-Hindu communities in India.

Action and reflection 9.3

Take five households of lower caste and five of upper caste in your locality. Make a chart of the household composition. See 6.4 of unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme and ask if there is joint property, cooperation and sentiments and ritual bonds of jointness among the members of the household with other collaterals who may not be residing in the (your selected) households.

Discuss the comparative findings at your Study Center.

9.7 Changes in Family Structure

Research involving the application of the modernisation thesis on the Indian joint family discussed earlier (see also Patel 2005) viewed the changes in the size, structure and composition of the family over time. Patel (2005) views the family as the workshop of kinship and marriage norms and practices. Studies on changes in the family in the last quarter of the 20th century have been scarce. Societal and structural changes have influenced the family size and structure (see unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme for the factors influencing the changes in the joint family).

Since the second wave of feminism in the 1960's, the family has been viewed with some amount of skepticism at least by feminist scholars. Increased female labour force participation, legislation impacting gender, personal law and international migration, advances in science and technology including new reproductive technologies among others, have interacted with the family. How has the family dealt with change? Whether it moved in the 'cultural lag' thesis direction or the resilience one, is yet to be explored. The past two decades have seen a decline in total fertility rate on the one hand and increased life expectancy on the other. This is bound to impact family living. Simultaneously, emigration to foreign countries is on the rise leading to the

phenomenon of the emptiness. Also the marital breakdown i.e. divorce is on the rise, and so is remarriage of widows and divorced women even among upper castes where it was earlier prohibited. It is not unheard of for a female to remain unmarried today. How the family deals with these changes is not yet studied seriously in Sociology. What is happening in the family in matrilineal communities? See Jain (1996) and Shardamoni (1999) for family, kinship and marriage and changes in matrilineal communities in India. What happens to families and households in the following contexts: a) intercaste marriage, b) inter-religious marriage, c) economic liberalization, and d) religious conversion? The way in which these contexts impact family formations in India is not yet studied.

9.8 Perspectives on the Family

After having studied the concepts of the household, its privileging over the family and the studies in this respect, we shall study the theoretical perspectives on the family.

1) Functionalist Perspective

On the basis of the institution of the family in 250 societies varying from small hunting bands to large industrial societies, Murdock (1949) drew two conclusions: that the nuclear family is a universal institution and it is a functional group indispensable to society. In the post-War transition period, the eminent sociologist and social theorist Talcott Parsons's (1959) structural, functional and comparative theory of society and social change predicted an isolation, differentiation and specialisation of the nuclear family as a bounded sub-system of the American society, while denying the growing post-War perception that the declining sexual morality and the marital breakdown portended the eminent breakdown of the American family. Two basic and irreducible functions, common to the family in all societies, Parsons said, would be performed by the American family. These are the primary socialisation of children and stabilisation of adult personalities of the population. It is in this context that the fit between nuclear family and the industrial society was forwarded. The functions performed by the wider kin group, Parsons' said would be taken over by formal institutions in the industrial society and be shared with the conjugally bounded nuclear family. This way the two essential functions of the family continued to be performed and the American family would remain stable. To Parsons the genealogical and siblinkship links in the family were retained in their basic elementary form. Power and authority of parents over children and both instrumental and expressive functions between spouses and generations enabled the nuclear family to continue to perform its basic functions.

Typical of the integrated and harmonious view of the functionalist perspective, Parsons saw the generational hierarchy and division of labour in the American family as functional. Secondly, the ideal middle class American nuclear family, to him, had reached the ultimate level in the evolutionary process. Parsons's evolutionary perspective was adopted by Goode (1963) in his study of world revolution in family patterns.

The functionalist perspective has been out of favour for sometime now. Parsons was criticized for assuming the white middle class American families as the ideal nuclear families. Morgan (1975) finds no class, regional or religious variation in Parsons' family. Like Mudock, Parsons assumed the family to be universal. Besides, there was no exploration of alternatives to the family.

Besides, as stated earlier, the parent-child hierarchy and gender roles in the family were in harmony, but it was only partially true. Family tensions and conflicts (Vogel and Bell) and exploitative relations (Laing 1971) do exist in families. Leach (1967) has found that members of nuclear families take immense emotional toll on each other.

2) Conflict Perspective

Engels' famous work on the state, family and private property (first published in 1884) was the first Marxian attempt to analyse the family. Like Parsons, Engels too took an evolutionary approach alongside the materialist interpretation of history. Restrictions on sexuality and sexual relations and control over women's reproduction were linked with the emergence of the state and the emergence of private property. Control over sexuality and the monogamous family came to be closely related in Engels's work drawn from different historical epochs, conjectures, and the work of Morgan (1871). The monogamous family was based on the supremacy of man for undisputed paternity to enable certainty of a natural heir to the family inheritance.

The marriage between Marxian ideas and feminism during the second feminist wave in the 1960s and 1970s employed Marxian concepts in critiquing the family. Women as producers of one of the basic forces of capitalism, the labour force, were tied down with reproduction and the domestic space without any payment for their contribution. Rowbothom (1973) elaborates through other research how reproduction functions as a hidden subsidy to the capitalist and hidden tax on the proletariat. Raising children discourages workers from bargaining (by withdrawing/holding back) in the wage market. Women's oppression and their acceptance of male aggression is viewed as an expression of workers' legitimate anger at their powerlessness in the public domain.

David Copper (1972) in "The death of the family" extends reproduction to incorporate ideological conditioning for an obedient and submissive labour force. Thus parental authority is also viewed in Marxian terms as a means to reproduce human beings who would accept the hierarchical order of the capitalist society. The family works as the facilitating institution for capitalism. Feminists found reproduction as the main source of women's oppression which essentialises and oppresses the woman. Property rights, rights over children and such other entitlements follow from gender relations in the family (Agarwal 1994, 1997). Motherhood had to be overcome if women were to be liberated and achieve equality with man. Everingham (1994) analyses the shifts in feminist positions since the 1970s with respect to women's autonomy, (as form of subjectivity). The 'domestic mode of production' is Delphy's (1970) thesis on the domestic unit's and thereby women's oppression in the capitalist society. The capitalist state works in a manner exploits women and families through family ideology and sentiments. The sentimentality veils the exploitative character of capitalist relations of production through the domestic mode of production.

3) Cultural Perspective

Family studies achieved a conceptual advancement in privileging the 'household' over the 'family' that enabled more rigorous cross-cultural comparative research in the field. The stress of numerical composition somehow came into limelight through perhaps the popularity of the term 'household' in the census, while the principles of relationship and family

organisation got lesser attention. Of late, other aspects of family have attracted academic attention.

Attempts at understanding the ideology of the family and particularly the joint family has thrown up a few interesting studies. Research on emotions in the family has found some favour. Shah (1998) comments on norms and values held by different members of a family and their comportment and behaviour in relation to others for commensality in the family. (See Lynch 1990 for more on other societies)

Theories of procreation are related with differential power, rights and entitlements by age and sex in the family in India (Dube 1986, 1997). The ubiquitous procreation metaphor of seed and earth, assume the male as the active principle, while the female as the passive one. She is a vessel, a passive principle in the unequal contribution of reproductive resources for the family (see del Valle 1993 for a somewhat differential contribution of genders in reproduction in Nepal). The Nepali mother is not simply a passive field but is believed to contribute in forming some parts of the foetus, while the father is the important one. Dube (1997) also acknowledges the significance of the mother in forming the child's identity, since the caste of both parents goes in placing the child in the caste hierarchy. Hypergamy and hypogamy practices are linked to this conception about parental contribution as are rules of sapinda exogamy. In matrilineal communities such as the Khasi, the perception about the contribution of different sexes in reproduction is quite contrary to that in patrilineal societies (see Nongbri 1993).

The cognitive character acknowledged in the descent principle translates into social, symbolic, reproductive and material rights and entitlements at most stages in a person's life in the family, both in matrilineal as well as patrilineal societies (see Agarwal 1994, Gray 1995, Uberoi 1996, Dube 1997, and Patel 1994). The impact of this on reproduction is studied by Dyson and Moore (1981), Basu (1992). For related dimensions of autonomy through the life cycle approach, see Patel (1994 and 1999). A somewhat different understanding of the contribution of genders is found in communities operating the alliance principle (see unit 12 of this block for details and Dumont 1966).

The household as a structure of consciousness (see Gray 1995 for the Nepali householders' views), its priority over individual interests (Patel 1994) translates into everyday life forms. Love (Anpu in Tamil) as a holistic emotion in society, not merely erotic or conjugal in Trawick (1990) is a fresh insight into family relationships [see the restraint on expressive affection for one's infant over other family members' children in Patel (1994)].

Dube (1998), Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) provide a different voice regarding the social reproduction of gendered beings in the context of socialisation in the family. The ideology of care lends itself into a heavier burden of care on women in the family (Dalley 1988). At the state legislation level welfare programmes are critiqued (Rissew and Parliwala 1996).

4) Cooperative – Conflict Perspective

We have seen above that the 1960s was a watershed in the history of family studies. It was discovered that Love, conjugality and oppression co-exist in

the family alongside unequal gender relations. The post War development project came under critical scrutiny when feminist economists pointed out the futility of some of the assumptions of economic theory applied on the family as a unit of the analysis in state policies and development programmes. The dialectical relationships at family level rather than viewing the family as a safe haven in the unkind world or as an institution on the verge of breakdown need to be seriously explored. We shall see the cooperative conflict perspective in unit 11 in greater detail.

9.9 Conclusion

In this unit you have learnt about the institution of family. It is a unique institution since it has both a private as well as a visibly public characteristic at one and the same time. The family is more or less a universal institution since most of us, all over the world belong to a family. The very visible and commonplace presence of the family gives the impression that it can be understood by anyone and is rather a soft subject in Sociology or vice-versa. Research on family therefore is full of constraints as it also deals with sensitive details. However, traditionally, the family has been considered to be significant and social philosophers throughout history have attempted to understand its nature.

You learnt about the meaning of the terms ‘family’ and ‘household’ and their interlinkage with marriage and kinship. Family has been broadly described as the primary group comprising husband-wife unit (parents) and their children. Household is the residence shared by a family or a part of the family. The family is based on the principles of kinship, and its members usually share a common residence, which is called a household.

A brief description about the large joint families, as described in the Hindu epics like the ‘Ramayan’ and ‘Mahabharat’ has been given. The ideal type of joint family as described by these epics is greatly admired by most Hindus in India. Notions of filial piety i.e. the relationship between father and son is held in high estimation. ‘Ramayan’ is the ideal for people to emulate as filial ties are underscored over conjugal ties. You learnt that the two kinship links between (i) parent-child and (ii) siblings are found to exist in reality in various permutations and combinations. It is in this manner that one can distinguish between nuclear/elementary and joint/extended families.

Research on the family in India has adopted different approaches. Like any knowledge of a cultural reality, family research has also been conducted from different points of view. In this unit you have learnt about the textual view of family as well as the field view. The research on family has a history of nearly three decades from 1950s onwards in Sociology and Social Anthropology both in the West and in India. Goody’s (1962) influence on family studies took some time to influence studies of the family in India, but empirical studies of the family continued to be under the influence of the basic difference between the oriental and the occidental types of family. This type cast remained a given fact. However the notion of the ‘domestic group’ as well as the developmental cycle of ‘the household’ provided a processual view of the family, which brought the lived reality of family structure and composition closer to sociological scrutiny.

You learnt about the contributions of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists in the field of family and kinship studies. There has been an

over-whelming interest in family studies (Dube 1974). It was only next to caste in significance at the time of the emergence of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. The effect of liturgical and legal texts continued to linger in studies of the joint family and the changes therein. The overlap of the ideal, normative and behavioral with that of value and fact in family studies continued until the concept of the household as a heuristic device rescued the sociology of family.

In this unit the in-depth description of 'household' and its development providing the processual aspect of a 'domestic group' has been critically analysed. The pattern of the developmental cycle in each society is affected by three major factors, such as, demographic factor, series of explicitly stated norms regarding residence of different relatives in a household and the interpersonal relations of the members. The processes of 'fusion' and 'fission' have been explained.

The myth of the disintegration of the joint family is related to the evolutionary thesis that the nuclear family characterised industrial societies while joint families were characteristic of feudal Asiatic societies. Most sociologists have studied the 'patrilineal' forms of family. However, some studies for example, of the 'Nayars' of Kerala have focused on the 'matrilineal' family. The joint family in South India, particularly among the Nayars who were matrilineal, did not resemble the textual and scriptural family of the Indian liturgical texts. Both the matrilineal, as well as, patrilineal families of South India differed from those of the patrilineal joint families of North India.

In this unit the changes in the family structure have been described. Family has been viewed as the workshop of kinship and marriage norms and practices. Societal and structural changes have influenced the family size and structures. You read about the feminist scholars' skeptical views on family after the second wave of feminism in the 1960s.

Finally, the brief outline of different sociological perspectives has been provided to you in this unit. These are the functionalist perspective, the conflict perspective which included the feminist views of the family, the cultural perspective and the cooperative conflict perspective. In the next unit you will learn further about the household as a cooperative-conflicting unit.

9.10 Further Reading

Anderson, M. (ed.) 1980 [1971]. *Sociology of the Family*. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

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Unit 10

The Household as a Cooperative— Conflicting Unit

Contents

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 The Socio-economic Dynamics of the Household
- 10.3 Capabilities, Well-being, Agency and Perception
- 10.4 Social Technology, Cooperation and Conflicts
- 10.5 Conclusion
- 10.6 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

Unit 10 has the objective of introducing a critical thought process in the minds of students on the basis of research in the field of family and household as operational sites of human behaviour. After going through this unit, you should be able to see that ‘household’ in this unit connotes a co-residential unit of the family. Also you will be able to:

- ≈ See the household as a workshop of family life;
- ≈ Understand that functionalist and conflict perspectives have contributed to the cooperative-conflict perspective and that feminist thought has substantially contributed to this perspective;
- ≈ Understand that a household is not a unified and undifferentiated category;
- ≈ Explore the idea that sex, reproduction and economic considerations impinge on household members differently according to age, sex, gender relations and kin ties;
- ≈ Find out how state impinges upon the household and its members; and
- ≈ See that the cooperative-conflict perspective initially focussed on the household economy alone but we are extending the argument in this unit to include reproduction, state, religion, community and violence.

10.1 Introduction

In Unit 9 we have seen that the household and family are organised along the lines of residence and kinship respectively. The two may or may not coincide with each other at all times and places. Desai (1964) and Shah (1973) have shown us that the census of India analysed the household data on the basis of the numerical size of the household and arrived at the conclusion that the joint family was giving way to nuclear family in India. This was challenged by examining the numerical data from the dimension of kinship and jointness of the family.

In a somewhat similar manner, feminists, and particularly feminist economists challenged the conventional assumptions in economic theory that all members in a family are identical for purposes of economic analysis. We have seen that like Marxists, radical feminists saw the family as an exploitative and oppressive institution that was in turn exploited by the capitalist structure. But liberal and socialist feminism did not, unlike radical feminism, think that

the family was dispensable and technology could liberate women by taking over the reproductive functions. To them, the family was the chief institution of patriarchy. The alternative institution did not surface as a viable possibility, despite efforts such as the 'kibbutz'.

The family has been the bone of contention in feminist thought. Socialist feminists did think that the family and reproduction tied women down. Their resolve was for women to move into the public sphere and be like men to be equal with them both inside and outside the domestic sphere. Women's entry into the public sphere was to prove that women were as good as men. This would not keep them reduced to the status of the 'second sex', to use Beauvior's (1972) expression. While socialist feminists' route to equality with men was through the entry of women into the public sphere, liberal feminists wanted liberty, justice and equal rights as citizens. Wollstonecraft (1792) argued against the wife's dependency within marriage and being an ornamental symbol of man's success rather than his partner. She spoke against the suspension of the very legal existence of the wife, or at least her incorporation and consolidation into that of the husband. It was in this context that Wollstonecraft insisted that women had an independent right to education, property and the protection of the civil law. The woman's rights as a citizen were needed to ensure that women were not forced into marriage through economic necessity, and wives were not dependent on the goodwill of their husbands.

Reproduction and mothering roles of women in the family do not easily lend themselves into the public/ private dichotomy when citizenship rights are at stake. But motherhood as a form of citizenship which Wollstonecraft argues for, does not solve the problem of male privilege in formal political and legal power while leaving women as dependents of men. The dilemma between motherhood and citizenship rights without being dependent on men is termed as 'the Wollstonecraft dilemma' (Pateman, 1988). Wollstonecraft, like liberal feminists today, was seeking citizenship for women on gender-neutral grounds, at the same time recognizing their specific qualities and roles, especially mothering, within a framework that allowed women to become full citizens only by being like men. Today feminists look at difference among women obtained in class, race and community differentials, as interfering with the project of gender equality. Thus questions of inequality between men and women cross-cut those with class, race and community (caste and religious). See ICSSR 1974 for a comprehensive coverage of gender inequalities in India. It is in the above context that intra-family differences gained privilege in research. We shall learn about this perspective below.

10.2 The Socio-economic Dynamics of the Household

The standard literature on economic development was, until the 1970s, frequently reluctant to consider the position of women as a separate problem of importance of its own. Gender-based analysis was often seen as unnecessarily divisive. In economic development studies, many writers insisted on keeping the deprivation of entire families (actually meaning households) as the right focus of studying misery and for seeking remedies, thus placing households in the class-structure and in the economic strata for analysing the poverty-prosperity range in a given setting.

As mentioned in 10.1 above, feminist thought, especially feminist economics literature was critical of standard economic development studies in late

1970s and early 1980s. Besides, socio-economic development instead of economic growth driven development also emerged as an alternative perspective and possibility around the same period. The challenge to the modernist project was to incorporate a range of socio-political and cultural variations rather than take societies/ communities as monolithic, undifferentiated categories. Gender sensitive development literature (Moser 1993) too critiqued the undifferentiated analysis in economic development literature as it evolved its analysis from the women in development (WID) approach to the gender and development (GAD) approach.

Though the non-gender view may have a plausibility in some contexts, in others, income and class categories are over-aggregative and even misleading. Gender is a crucial parameter in social and economic analysis in relation to variables such as class, income, ownership, occupation and household status. It is now well-known that women have a lower status within and outside the household compared to men; even in women-headed households, women face adversity in economic terms. Women-headed households constitute a majority of the poor households. Feminisation of poverty speaks about the gender dimension of poverty. Thus concentrating on household poverty without looking at the gender dimension is misleading in understanding the causation, consequences and relationships that work in the poorer households. Sen (1987) argued for promoting research incorporating the gender dimension order to arrive at a better understanding of the household dynamics. You can refer Sen (1993) where he has taken up three different analytical views of the family (actually meaning, household) and evaluated their contributions and shortcomings and privileged the cooperative-conflict perspective.

Though the family was criticized by Marxists as a selfish and individualising institution, there exists contrary evidence where love, care and sacrifice/ selflessness, conflict and violence go on simultaneously in the family. We have seen above that there has not yet been an alternative to the institution of the family though its size and structure, including the normative structure has not remained the same over time (see Patel 2005 for the changing unchangeable of the family i.e. that aspect of family which is considered to be beyond changes, such as, the norms, values etc. In this light let us consider the three kinds of assumptions about the family discussed by Sen (1993). The Glue-together family (household) assumes the family as a unit which takes decisions about income, occupation, distribution and allocation among its members and other expenditure heads. In such a view, there are no individual decisions, individual utility, etc. but only family decisions. This model aggregates all individuals in the household into a unit and adds other households in a society to be analysed only according to their income, expenditure, property ownership, etc. disregarding age, sex, kinship and relationship differentials which are socially and culturally organised. The latter constraints are also stretched and bended as household members strategise even while acting in typified ways.

The second case, Sen takes up is based on Becker's (1981) assumption that the household is 'the super-trader family'. Becker views the family from an economic approach where each individual in the household is maximising individual utilities, through their activities including entering into marriage and reproduction, besides everyday, routine behaviour. Becker ignores that this utility maximisation is not carried out uncompromisingly - without constraints of propriety, norm and convention (see Patel 1994 for more on Becker and his thesis of 'a baby or a car' in the socially organised and

situated fertility behaviour in rural Rajasthan). The ‘bargaining model’ brings into the arena of the household, principles of rational self-interest – a needed demystification of the ‘veil of enchanted relationships’ which obscures family dynamics. The relational character of the family – household is eclipsed though, in focusing on family members’ actions solely in their capacity as individuals. Perhaps one could see ‘negotiation’ as a key principle in the arena of the family-household, where men and women perceive themselves as operating in and through relationships, and where, using the structural gaps and ambivalences in the system, pushing the limits, drawing upon the available alternate conceptions, women work their way through kinship structures which are both oppressive and – particularly in the absence of state responsibility for social security – supportive, providing them their primary security network (Ganesh 2001:29-30).

The third assumption Sen takes up is that of ‘the despotic family’. This approach assumes that the despotic head of the family takes all decisions and others just obey. Sen points to the literature produced on ‘status of women’ and ‘feminisation of poverty’ which shows a variance from ‘the despotic family’ view. Besides, it ignores the constraints of propriety and norms which too are not uniform for entire societies. For gradual shifts in the position of different members of the household during their life course, see Patel 1994 (chapters 6 and 7) on how women are able to negotiate their fertility preferences after a certain stage in their life. The ability to negotiate and decide does not remain static but varies over time and in different permutations and combinations with differential experiences of the household members and invocation of norms, constraints and propriety. It is here that the household is visible in its cooperative-conflict unit form (see Sen 1993 for capabilities and comparisons by gender in health, education, survival, including sex-ratio and such other human capital development parameters).

Reflection and Action 10.1

Interview 5 women of different age groups 16-20, 25-30, 35-40, 45-50, and 55-65.

Ask them about the different roles they play in their household; socially, economically, in decision making. Write a note of about 5 pages on “Role and Status of Women in an Indian Household” comparing the data collected through the interview. Share your note with other students at your Study Centre.

The systematically inferior position of women inside or outside the household in many societies points to the necessity of treating gender as a force of its own in development analysis. The economic hardship of women-headed households is a problem both of female deprivation and of family poverty. Furthermore, females and males in the same family may well have quite divergent predicaments, and this can make the position of women in the poorer families particularly precarious (on female-headed households see Gulati 1981 Profiles in Female Poverty).

Over the last few decades, there has been substantial documentation from a women’s studies perspective of the gender bias in the household which lead to measurable negative outcomes for women. In view of the dominance of patrilineal kinship over large parts of India, it is an obvious step to ascribe

to it the devaluation of daughters and the son-preference which are salient features in contemporary Indian families. But this is too broad a generalisation to capture nuances and retain a cutting edge. It is necessary to scrutinize the family-household to see in what ways and to what extent it is the site for working out of rules and principles not derived from descent or even from kinship. There is a need to keep in mind the distinction between household as a site of gender bias, family as an agency for socialisation of members to accept and transmit the bias and as a monitoring agency responsible for punitive action, and the ideology of the descent system as a source of devaluation of females, insofar as it permeates the family - household. The household as a concrete institution is only partly constituted by patrilineal kinship. Other traditional and modern institutions contribute to the articulation of patriarchy. These include caste-based institutions and their ideology, the state and its policies, religious institutions, economy, media – thus, the culture and society at large. Insofar as they assume and project certain ideas of male and female, these inevitably percolate into the matrix of the family- household. The source of these ideas is not necessarily the descent system. Patriarchy has often been used to describe a society which at various major institutional levels codes and expresses male dominance and in such a society, kinship is often but not necessarily patrilineal. There is no doubt that entitlements to familial resources are based largely on kinship rules, and in this regard, patriliney is unbalanced and works to the disadvantage of women (see unit 6 of ESO-02 Society in India of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme). But the specific character of patriliney in India also reflects what could be called cultural concepts and values such as the idea of marriage as destiny, the spiritual merit of *dana* particularly *kanyadana* ('gift of the virgin'), the auspiciousness of the married woman and the inauspiciousness of the widow, the *anuloma-pratiloma* rule of intercaste marriage, the idea of transformation (or 'transubstantiation' as it is sometimes called) of a woman's body upon marriage, and the sacramental character of her ritual incorporation into the affinal household. These are not inherent in patrilineal systems, but are specific to Hindu India and they have definite implications for women's life trajectories in the subcontinent. More critically, many aspects of the workings of the household, including what can be called familial ideology, are derived from the exigencies of caste (Ganesh 2002: 26-27).

There are also systematic differences among the developing countries in the survival rates of females vis-à-vis males. Asia has a sex ratio (female per 1000 male) of only 950, but Africa comes closer to Europe and North America with a sex ratio of 1020 indeed considerably higher than in sub-Saharan Africa. Even within Asia the sex ratio is higher than unity in some regions such as South east Asia (1001), but much lower in China, India, Bangladesh and west Asia (940) and in Pakistan (900). There is substantial variation within a given country: for example, in India the sex ratio varies from 870 and 880 in Haryana and Punjab to 1030 in Kerala. It is clear that had the average African sex ratio obtained in India, and then given the number of men; there would have been about 30 million more women in India today (see Sen 1988). The corresponding number of 'missing women' in China is about 30 million the cumulative contrast of sex specific mortality rates - not unrelated to social and economic inequalities between men and women-find expression in these simple statistics, which form something like the tip of an ice berg much of which is hard to observe. Later studies (Agnihotri 2000) and Bose and Shiva (200?) highlight the sharper unfavourable differences in sex ratio over time and regions in India.

There is no dearth of evidence on the gender discriminatory ethos in the contemporary scene. John Hoddinott (1996) contributes to the literature in this area. Presenting evidence from the Philippines and Bangladesh, Hoddinott points out that nutritional adequacy at the household level correlates poorly with that at the level of the individual household member. The data he cites show that of the individuals comprising study households, a substantial proportion were subject to relatively low food intake even when aggregate levels of household nutrition were high, and further, that within households, food allocations favoured males over females. Disparities such as these have of course been explained in terms of the social and cultural manifestations of gender discrimination. Hoddinott shows in his paper that there is another dimension involved as well.

In making his point, he invokes the economic principles of efficiency, equity and bargaining. Of these, the first makes for a distribution of food such that the household's nutritional resources accrue preferentially to its economically more productive members. This forms the basis of food allocations deliberately tilted in favour of males. Maximisation of the household's productivity and income is the rationale here. One implication of this, the author points out, is that school meals programmes targeted at girls can be thwarted when households 'compensate' by reducing the quantities of food given to girls at home and reallocate the 'surplus' to the family's economically more productive members. Gender discrimination in the household is thus overlaid with an economic rationale. But the principle of efficiency is not inexorable, for there are times when it is eclipsed by the principle of equity. Evidence from rural India suggests that the former is likely to operate less during seasons of plenty, at which time equity considerations are likely to come to the fore.

The third principle – bargaining – draws upon non-cooperative game theory. The advantage to household members when they pool their resources, Hoddinott (1996) says, is jeopardized when any member implicitly threatens to go for an 'outside option', i.e. an economic opportunity that is available outside of a familial pooling arrangement. That forms a bargaining lever for laying claim to a greater share of a household's food resources. This empirical problem of perception and communication is indeed important. On the other hand, it is far from obvious that the right conclusion to draw from this is the non-viability of the notion of personal welfare. There are considerable variations in the perceptions of individuality even within such a traditional society, and here the lack of perception of personal welfare is neither immutable nor particularly resistant to social development. Indeed the process of politicisation – including a political recognition of the gender issue – can itself bring about sharp changes in these perceptions.

The systematically inferior position of women inside and outside the household in many societies points to the necessity of treating gender as a force of its own in development analysis. The economic hardship of woman-headed households is a problem both of female deprivation and of family poverty. Furthermore, females and males in the same family may well have quite divergent predicaments, and this can make the position of women in the poorer families particularly precarious. To concentrate on family poverty irrespective of gender can be misleading in terms of both causation and consequences.

The fact that the relative deprivation of women vis-à-vis men is by no means uniform across the world does not reduce the importance of gender as a

parameter of analysis. This variability is an important reason for giving serious attention to the causal antecedents of the contrasting deprivations. To take an extremely simple and crude example, it is clear that despite the evident biological advantages that women seem to have over men in survival and longevity (when there is some symmetry in the attention they receive on basic matters of life and death, such as nutrition, health care, and medical attention), there is nevertheless a remarkable preponderance of surviving men over surviving women in the population of less developed countries taken as a whole, in sharp contrast with the position of the more developed countries. Whereas there are about 106 women per 100 men in Europe and North America, there are only 97 women per 100 men in the developing countries as a whole. Since mortality and survival are not independent of care and neglect, and are influenced by social action and public policy, even this extremely crude perspective cannot fail to isolate gender as an important parameter in development studies.

It is, however difficult to translate this elementary recognition into practice and to find an adequate framework for the use of gender categories and sex specific information in social analysis. Sen (1990) asserts that the problem is far too complex and basic to be ‘resolved’ by any kind of simple model, but one could go some distance toward a better understanding of the problem by broadening the conceptual structure and the informational base of gender analysis in economic and social relations. He thus extends the income and distribution of resources within the household to incorporate the following elements in his analysis.

10.3 Capabilities, Well-being, Agency and Perception

Sen (1990) examines different theories of household economics such as standard models of “household production”, “family allocations”, or “equivalence scales” in capturing the coexistence of extensive conflicts and pervasive cooperation in household arrangements. But these too have an inadequate informational base and are particularly negligent of the influence of perceived interests and perceived contributions. In this light, not only are capabilities, well-being and agency important but so is perception regarding these qualities and such other attributes.

An alternative approach to ‘cooperative-conflicts’ is then sketched, identifying certain qualitative relation in the form of directional responses of the outcome to certain determining variables in the informational base. These relations are translated into a format of ‘extended entitlements’, based on sharpening the concept of ‘entitlements’ (already used in studying famines and deprivation of households) by incorporating notions of perceived legitimacy in intrahousehold divisions.

Each person has several identities. Being a man or a woman is one of them. Being a member of a family is another. Our understanding of our interests, obligations, objectives, and legitimate behaviour is influenced by the various — and sometimes conflicting — effects of these diverse identities. In some contexts the family identity may exert such a strong influence on our perceptions that we may not find it easy to formulate any clear notion of our own individual welfare. Based on empirical observations of the family-centred perception in some traditional societies (such as India), some authors have disputed the viability of the notion of personal welfare in those societies (Das and Nicholas 1981). It has often been observed that if a typical Indian

rural woman was asked about her personal “welfare”, she would find the question unintelligible, and if she was able to reply, she might answer the question in terms of her reading of the welfare of her family. The idea of personal welfare may not be viable in such a context. This happened not only with women but with men also. This was observed during the fieldwork among the elderly in Rajasthan (Shah, Patel and Lobo 1987). Neither men nor women found meaningful and relevant the questions on income (personal) and having a room for oneself. The nearest they could go to was personal expenses on items no one else in the household consumed, e.g. tobacco, snuff, opium etc.

Insofar as intrafamily divisions involved significant inequalities in the allotment of food, medical attention, health care, and the like (often unfavorable to the well being- even survival- of women), the lack of perception of personal interests combined with a great concern for family welfare is, of course, just the kind of attitude that helps to sustain the traditional inequalities. History bears evidence to the fact that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived. The underdog comes to accept the legitimacy of the unequal order and becomes an implicit accomplice. It can be a serious error to take the absence of the consciousness of that inequality as evidence of the absence of that inequality (or the non viability of that question) argues Sen. We can go back to the example given earlier from fieldwork experience with the elderly. Not only the women but even the men found questions of personal/ individual income and room absurd. These men were by no means the underdogs in their families, nor were the elderly women. Perception is based both on facts and on cultural notions, connotations and values about those facts, thereby making the study of deprivation and interests of family members a complex one.

Sen further states that personal interest and welfare are not just matters of perception; there are objective aspects of these concepts that command attention even when the corresponding self- perception does not exist. For example, the ‘ill fare’ associated with morbidity or undernourishment has an immediacy that does not await the person’s inclination or willingness to answer detailed questions regarding his or her welfare. Indeed, the well being of the person may plausibly be seen in terms of the person’s functionings and capabilities; what he or she is able to do or be (e.g. the ability to be well nourished, to avoid morbidity or mortality, to read and write and communicate, to take part in the life of the community, to appear in public without shame). It is here, that Sen’s economics comes back rather strongly. He argues for individualism and this is in accordance with western liberal thought in the utilitarian tradition.

It is also possible to distinguish between a person’s ‘well-being’ and ‘agency’. A person may have various goals and objectives other than the pursuit of his or her well being, although there are obvious links between a person’s well being and the fulfilment of his or her other objectives. The overall success as an agent may not be closely connected- and certainly may not be identified- with the person’s own well-being. It is the agency aspect that is most influenced by a person’s sense of obligation and perception of legitimate behaviour.

10.4 Social Technology, Cooperation, and Conflicts

The ‘social’ content of technology is what Marx called ‘the combining together of various processes into a social whole’. The so-called ‘productive’ activities

may be parasitic on other work being done, such as housework and food preparation, the care of children, or bringing food to the field where cultivators are working. Technology is not only about equipments and its operational characteristics but also about social arrangements that permit the equipment to be used and the so-called productive processes to be carried on.

Household activities have been viewed in many contradictory ways in assessing production and technology. On the one hand, it is not denied that the sustenance, survival, and the reproduction of workers are obviously essential for the workers being available for outside work. On the other hand, the activities that produce or support that sustenance, survival or reproduction are not typically regarded as contributing to output and are often classified as ‘unproductive labour’.

Sen (1990) gives a hypothetical example of a household to combine the material (monetary), the capabilities and the perceptions as co-existing in a household. He says that an integrated view should be formed of the pattern of activities outside or inside the home that together make up the production processes in traditional as well as modern societies. The relations between the sexes are obviously much conditioned by the ways these different activities sustain and support each other, and depend inter alia on the particular patterns of integration.

The prosperity of a household depends on the totality of various activities—getting money incomes, purchasing or directly producing (in the case of, say, peasants) food materials and other goods, producing edible food out of food materials, and so on. But in addition to aggregate prosperity, even the divisions between sexes in general, and specifically those within the household, may also be deeply influenced by the pattern of gender division of work. In particular, the members of a household face two different types of problems simultaneously. One involving cooperation (adding to the total availabilities) and the other conflict (dividing the total availabilities among the members of the household). Social arrangements regarding who does what, and who takes what decisions can be seen as responses to this combined problem of cooperation and conflict. The sexual division of labour is one part of the social arrangement.

Seeing social arrangements in terms of a broader view of technology and production has some far reaching effects. First, it points to the necessity of examining the productive aspects of what are often treated as purely ‘cultural phenomena’. Contributions that are in effect made by labour expended in activities that are not directly involved in ‘production’ narrowly defined. Second it throws light on the stability and survival of unequal patterns of social arrangements in general and deeply asymmetric sexual division in particular. An example is the resilient social division of labour in most societies by which women do the cooking and are able to take on outside work only insofar as that can be combined with persisting as the cook. Third, it points to the division between paid and unpaid work in the context of general productive arrangements, and fourth, the specific patterns of sexual divisions outside and within the household. The nature of cooperative arrangement implicitly influences the distributional parameters and the household’s response to conflicts and perception of interest. Systems of kinship orient members of different kinship systems differentially to many activities. Perceptions of activities may differ in societies with patrilineal, matrilineal

and bilineal kinship systems. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the spread and influence of patriliney as a macro ideology in the world. Dube (2001) has contrasted the three kinship systems by which the quality of gender relations and position of women vary in and outside the household.

By introducing the capabilities, agency and perception dimension to the household as a cooperative -conflict unit, Sen (1990) has broadened the scope of this perspective to cover a number of dimensions other than income and distribution of resources.

Action and Reflection 10.2

- 1) Read Dube 2001 (chapter 6) and discuss the comparative position of women in the household in the three kinship systems she describes in her essay or
- 2) Take five households in your neighbourhood. Make a list of activities and dietary intake of each of the members. Classify this data by sex, age and kinship ties with the head of the household.

Discuss the differentials both within and outside the household in work and diet among the members.

10.5 Conclusion

This unit focussed on the perspective that views the household as a cooperating and at the same time a conflicting unit. In the previous unit, unit 9 we had seen how emotions in the family and the household include not just the positive emotions of love and affection but also those such as tensions, hate, rivalry and jealousy. The cooperative conflict perspective came up in the backdrop of feminist thought and struggle. This thought also influenced economic analysis and questioned the value of studying the household as a unified whole without internal differentiation by gender. Subsequently, further advancement in the analytical parameters took place by incorporating issues of capabilities, well-being, agency, perception and social technology.

We have seen how kinship systems have differential meanings for similar activities. This will be further clarified in units 11 and 12 of this Block. We have also included the dimension of 'reproduction and gender differentials' in the household as cooperation combined with conflict in varying measures. We have discussed this issue in the introduction to this unit. We can also include the role of perceptions and see how perceptions regarding distribution of resources and inputs of different members in fertility decisions are influenced by the state through its policies. In a similar vein, the influence of caste and religious community on the household is strong and can affect the social technology, capability, agency and perception of activities in the household. These may range from franchise, political representation, choice of marriage partner, divorce and remarriage, biological and social reproduction, access to healthcare, etc. Population policies of India and China have impacted reproduction in the household quite differentially. State policies and the household / family may be analysed from the cooperative-conflict perspective.

10.6 Further Reading

Agnihotri, S.B. 2000. *Juvenile Sex Ratio Patterns in the Indian Population: A Fresh Exploration*. Sage Publication, New Delhi.

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Unit 11

Marriage and Its Changing Patterns

Contents

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Learning Objectives

Unit 11 aims to analyse the changing patterns of marriage in India. After going through the unit, it is expected that you would be able to:

- ~ question the universality of the institution of marriage in India;
- ~ discuss the aspect of age at marriage;
- ~ discuss variations in the pattern of selection of spouse;
- ~ describe the basic rites of marriage in different communities;
- ~ explain how marriage reflects the status aspirations of the groups involved in the material and symbolic transfer of wealth and prestige accompanying marriage; and
- ~ examine the issues of divorce and remarriage.

11.1 Introduction

We take for granted that the institutions like family, marriage and kinship are universal in India and sociologists need to discuss the variations in these institutions based on region, religion, language, caste, class and occupation. Owing to the whole range of variations they find it difficult to make generalisations about such institutions of the Indian social structure.

The basic question that will be raised in Unit 11 is the validity of discussing only the common and different elements in the institution of marriage in India. Does this give us an understanding of the institution of marriage as it obtains today in our country? Dealing with the feature of near universality of the institution of marriage and discussing the issue of age at marriage in India may bring out the unity that exists, across the regions, relating to these two features of marriage. You may on the other hand discuss such features in the context of diversity as the forms of marriage, patterns of selection of spouse, rites of marriage, material and non-material transactions involved in marriage, and the possibilities and mechanisms of divorce and widow remarriage in India. Most of these features relate to the primary marriage of a man or woman (i.e. marriage for the first time). Secondary

marriage of a widow/ widower or a separated or divorced woman/ man is accompanied by a nominal ceremony, where there are generally no or only a few rites. Similarly, the pattern of selection of spouse may differ in a primary and a secondary marriage.

Yet, having completed this process of looking at common and diverse features of the institution of marriage in India, you would still not have looked at the churning of ideas, values, practices and conflicts that the very notion of marriage brings to mind in the context of its changing patterns. We find that today the very concept of marriage and its epistemology is a subject of much questioning. Feminists, *dalit* scholars and leftists have in both theoretical and practical terms critiqued the prevalent notions about marriage. Some have accepted the ever-encompassing hold of the institution of marriage in everybody's personal life and attempted to negotiate it from its prevailing vantage point. In the feminist discourse, you would find that marriage is a major site or an organising platform through which the feminists have not only tried to understand oppression but also negotiated and established a more equal playing field. Along with the usual coverage that accrues to the topic of marriage generally you should also pay attention to emerging perceptions regarding the institution of marriage and its changing patterns. The examples of changing patterns and their theoretical significance that are cited here, have been derived from the coverage of a symposium, Marriage, Family and Community, with contributions from Shah (2005: 709), Hansman (2005: 709-712), John (2005: 712-715), Rao (2005: 715-718) and Rinchin (2005: 718-721). It has to be acknowledged here that their articles have helped in building the case for re-thinking our notions of marriage in India.

In the course of discussion of each of the above mentioned aspects we shall talk of the patterns of marriage with particular reference to the changes that have taken place in India since Independence. For descriptions of various aspects of the theme I have also referred you to detailed accounts already provided in the course material of Sociology courses of IGNOU's B A programme. Reading the referred portions will help you to obtain background information and explanations of basic concepts.

We will discuss each aspect of marriage with suitable illustrations from some of the major communities like the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians. Except for passing references, patterns of marriage that are found among the tribal population have not been described mainly because there is a separate Block in this Course on tribal population.

11.2 Is the Institution of Marriage Universal in India?

Marriage is an important social institution and therefore we need to assign a definition to it so that it has a universal reference and application. All the same it is a relationship that has, in the context of India, given rise to many controversies relating to the definition of marriage. Though the debate took place with particular reference to the Nayers of Kerala, the concerns it took up had a general relevance. You may like to know a little about this debate over problems of defining 'marriage'.

Leach (1955: 107-108) considered marriage to be "bundles of rights". The rights included

- = Legitimizing offspring
- = Socially approved access to the spouse's sexuality, labour and property

- ≈ Establishment of affinal relationships between persons and between groups.

It is possible to add as per a particular ethnographic context some other features to the above list of rights. But if you were to make a comparative study of marriage in different societies, you would like to define the term in a more precise manner so that your cross-cultural comparison refers to the same kinds of phenomenon. It has been quite common to refer to the 'Notes and Queries' to find such definitions. The 'Notes and Queries' (1951: 110) defines marriage in the following manner.

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognised legitimate offspring of both partners.

I suppose that you would gladly accept this definition of marriage in the context of society in India. But Gough, who studied the Nayar community of Kerala, found that the unions between Nayar girls and Nambudiri Brahman men could not be understood in terms of the above definition (for details of this particular case see Jain 1996: 151-190 and Unit 9 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B. A. programme). Gough (1959: 32) preferred to modify the definition of 'marriage' in the following words.

Marriage is a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratum.

This definition enlarges the scope of viewing marriage in a broader context than the definition of the Notes and Queries. It would include the case of Nuer woman-woman marriage, mentioned by Evans-Pritchard (1951: 108-109). It would also include the case of levirate unions, which consider the child as the legitimate offspring of a man other than its genitor. As you may already know that levirate is a quite common practice found in some parts of India. For example, Gazetteer of India (1965: 541) has mentioned the prevalence of levirate alliances among the Ahir of Haryana, some Jat communities and Girijan and several castes in Uttar Pradesh and among the Kodagu of Mysore. Levirate refers to a marriage in which a man has the obligation to marry the widow of his brother.

You can now make out that Gough's definition is an improvement on the one given in the Notes and Queries. You may also be aware of several cases published in newspapers about caste-based violence on young men and women opting to marry against caste or sub-caste norms. If a *jatav* boy wants to marry a *thakur* girl, the two would have to face violence at the hands of their respective caste panchayats. This sort of periodic reporting in the media shows that marriage has become a contested site in our fast changing social world. Fernandez (1999) and (Gopal) 2002 have documented cases of forced marriages, excommunication, unlawful locking, outright murders or last option suicides of those who have defied the existing norms of their castes/ classes.

The events mentioned above give rise to questions about the very nature of marriage and the variety of relationships it is to include in its scope. In India, as per Section 377, the law recognises for social and other purposes only blood and marriage relationships. In 1988, the first media reports of the Madhya Pradesh policewomen deciding to marry each other, brought out

into the open some other examples of ‘alternate relationships’, which had come up alongside marriage in different castes/ classes in both urban and rural India. Here is a ‘Reflection and Action’ exercise for you to ponder about yet other forms of marriage and decide if Gough’s definition or any other definition that you know about includes such cases.

Reflection and Action 11.1

Cline (1936) has described the homosexual unions of Western Egypt. Does Gough’s definition of marriage include this case?

‘Hindustan Times’ of August 2004 published a news item “Girlfriends shun families”. It referred to two young girls living in a slum in Bhopal. The parents of one of them had forcibly married her to a man but her ‘girlfriend’ disrupted the marriage and the two girls decided to live together. The police and the counsellors tried to help the girls to return to their families but the girls did not oblige them. Does Gough’s definition include this case?

Write your answers to the above questions on a separate sheet of paper. Then provide your own definition of ‘marriage’ that may have a better applicability in cross-cultural comparisons.

There is apparently one more problem with the above definitions, which make legitimating of children an essential component of marriage. Does it mean that all such marriages where no child is born are invalid? Is marriage not more than procreation? Can it not be considered as an existing fact if there are no children born? Bohanan (1949), has discussed Dahomean marriage and distinguished the rights of a woman as a wife (rights in *uxorem*) from rights over the children she may bear (rights in *genetricem*). ‘Times of India’ of 5th May 2005 published a news item on its first page with the title “Man tells HC: Wife can’t abort my child”. He appealed to the High Court to protect his right to fatherhood. This is an example of the kinds of rights we need to ponder about. These media reports have been quoted here to indicate the symptoms of wide-ranging changes occurring in the very notions of rights involved in marriage.

The above discussion shows that perhaps Leach (1961: 105) is right in saying that “all universal definitions of marriage are vain” and so also is Needham (1971), who holds that marriage in cross-cultural contexts refers to serial likenesses and does not reflect common structural features. As a matter of fact, Gough (1959: 23) too considers marriage as polythetic with an open-ended checklist. You may ask that if this is so, then why use the word ‘marriage’ and why not refer to such relationships by some other term?

The answer to this question is that nominally the word marriage has its reference to the context in which it exists and therefore we need to retain it till we can by consensus replace it by some other term. In India, the relationship is defined and sanctioned by custom and law prevalent in a hetero-normative and patriarchal social milieu. The definition of the relationship includes not only fairly understood guidelines for behaviour relating to sex but also regarding things like the particular way labour is to be divided and so are also other duties and privileges. Children born of marriage are considered the legitimate offspring of the married couple. Increase in the rate of marital discord has brought before the courts of law some

vexing questions about the right to fatherhood versus a woman's right over her own body.

The issue of legitimacy is important in the matters of inheritance and succession. Marriage is not only a means of sexual gratification but also a set of cultural mechanisms to ensure the continuation of the family, establishment of relationships of alliance between persons and between groups. Marriage is in this sense an almost universal social institution in India. With globalisation of culture and liberalisation of economy, the phenomenon of the wedding ceremony is the most visible reference to marriage in India. So you would agree with me that it is very hard indeed not to retain the term 'marriage' and discuss it with reference to the conceptual and socio-cultural context in which it appears.

11.3 What and Why of Marriage

You may be able to cite the religious texts of many communities in India outlining the purpose, rights and duties involved in marriage. Among the Hindus, for instance, marriage is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Ancient Hindu texts, such as the 'Dharmashastra' (see Trautman 1981), point out three main aims of marriage. These are *dharma* (duty), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure). The aims of marriage show that it is significant from both the societal as well as the individual's point of view. Marriage is significant in that it provides a legally and socially recognised process of acquiring children, especially sons who would not only carry on the family name but also perform periodic rituals including the annual "*shraddha*" to propitiate the dead ancestors. Majority of the Hindus look upon son(s) as a source of support in old age to parents and as the most important source of economic prosperity of the family. Marriage, in the Hindu system of four stages of life, enables a man to enter into the stage of a householder. Both a man and a woman are regarded incomplete without marriage.

The brief description above shows quite clearly that marriage for the Hindus finds its location in a hetero-normative, patriarchal family structure, in which organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, are vehemently against inter-religious marriages.

The notion of equality within marriage based on an ethic of justice does not find a place in the Hindu construction of the notion of marriage. This is the reason why there have been, historically speaking, a spate of experiments to change the form and practice of marriage itself by social reformers like Jotirao Phule, who along with his wife, Savitribai, established a school for untouchable girls in 1848 and a home for upper caste widows in 1854. Sensitive to oppression of women through burdens of chastity and caste purity that determined the code of conduct for women, Tarabai Shinde, an activist of Satyashodhak Samaj, followed in the footsteps of Phule and wrote a critique of gender relations in her piece, *Stri-Purush Tulana*. Shinde (1882) commented on sexual economics of marriage and prostitution and considered them as two sides of the same coin. Not only in western India, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, in southern India, challenged Hindu orthodoxy and recommended 'self-respect marriages', which undermined the connexion between marriage and religious rites. Similarly, Ambedkar's act of burning the 'Manusmriti' and writing *Riddles of Hinduism* in 1927 as well as Periyar's putting on a garland of shoes around the necks of Hindu religious idols symbolised the assaults on

the religious tenor of everyday life and provided a critical look at the institution of marriage in India.

Notwithstanding the activities of social reformers, you may rightly argue that even other communities in India regard marriage as an essential obligation. Islam views marriage as “*sunnah*” (an obligation), which every Muslim must fulfil. To bring yet more evidence of churning of ideas about marriage, you can refer media reports that in the case of Muslims in India, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board on 1st May 2005 issued a model ‘Nikah-Nama’ (see the ‘Times of India’ and the ‘Hindu’ of Monday 2nd May 2005). This shows the Board’s commitment to initiate social reforms and rooting out of social evils. The model ‘Nikah-Nama’ gives cognisance to the rights of the wife to food, shelter, clothing, medical treatment and maintenance and declares dowry as a crime. The document focuses on the present school and college-going generation. Though still continuing with the institution of ‘triple talaq’, the document makes divorce the last resort (see more comments on this matter in a later section of the unit). Christianity too, like other religions, holds marriage as critical to life and emphasises the establishment of a mutual relationship between husband and wife and adhering to their duties to each other.

You can further argue that marriage is significant as we find that only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried. According to the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI 1974: 81), only 0.5 per cent of women never marry in India. By and large, girls in India believe that marriage is a woman’s destiny. Married state is desirable and motherhood is a cherished achievement for most of us in India. You would find that only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried by choice.

Despite the near-universality of marriage among Indians, we find that goals of marriage are changing in general and for the urban and educated sections of the population in particular. A clear preference for small-size family has replaced the older notions of family with a large number of children especially sons being the source of status for parents. On the individual level, younger couples view marriage as a relationship for self-fulfillment rather than primarily for procreation.

There is also a strong protest movement among the *dalit* women against caste and gender violence and against the legal recognition of only *anuloma* marriages where upper caste men marry or live with lower caste women and not *pratiloma* ones where women of higher castes marry or live with lower caste men. Reforms among the lower caste and *dalit* communities include rehabilitation of women and men married to divinities like Khandoba and Yellamma. See ‘*Somavanshiya Mitra*’ of 1st December 1908 and 1st July 1909 about the marriage of Shivubai Lakshman Jadhav, a woman married to a divinity. An activist, Ganpatrao Hanmantrao Gaekwad had set an example by marrying her. While discussing marriage and its changing patterns in India we cannot ignore what is occurring at the level of marginalised communities and therefore all such details as mentioned above need to be incorporated in our discussions of marriage in India. You may already know about the role of social reformers in opposing child-marriage and creating an environment for the law to fix a minimum age for marriage of a girl/ boy.

11.4 Age at Marriage in India

Apart from marriage being almost universal, early marriage is also common in India. As early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, efforts were made to curb infant or child marriage. Reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jotirao Phule and others in the nineteenth and early twentieth century opposed child marriage. According to Das and Dey (1998: 92), the current level of age at marriage in India is low in comparison to most of the low fertility countries (for a historical background to this discussion see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B A programme). You should also pay attention to differences between various religious groups, classes and castes in the matter of age at marriage.

The median age at marriage is low in India. This is in spite of legislations, multi-pronged strategies to spread awareness regarding the dangers of early marriage. Starting with Rajasthan, where the female age at marriage was 17.5, the lowest in India in 1991, and going upto Assam, where it was 21.1, the highest in India in 1991, the mean age at marriage for females for 1991 was 18.3 (see the 1991 census of India). In newspapers and journals we read about marriage fairs (*mela*), especially in rural areas, in which the average age of the bride is reported to be below fifteen years. In some states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, child marriages continue (National Perspective Plan 1988). Both the 'Times of India' and the 'Hindu' reported on the occasion of Akhteej festival of 2005 that the girls in some areas refused to participate in such marriage fairs and expressed a strong desire to continue their studies. These girls were aware that the minimum legal age at marriage is 18 years for girls. More than the awareness about the minimum legal age at marriage, the change in attitudes of young girls and a positive articulation of the choice of continuing their education are the signs of changing patterns of marriage in India. For the connexion between low age at marriage and the notions of preserving the chastity or purity of women see CSWI: 1974.

Female age at marriage rose from 16.1 years in 1961 to 19.3 in 1991. The rural-urban gap in female age at marriage for 1991 was two years. According to Das and Dey (1998: 109), this indicates that in spite of rise in age at marriage a wide gap in this matter persisted between the rural and urban areas of the country.

It is important to note the variation in the age at marriage among different communities in India. For instance, the average age at marriage is as low as 15 years for girls among many of the hill tribes in India, while among the Christians, Parsis and some educated sections living in urban areas, the age at marriage has been above the minimum age prescribed by law (see CSWI 1974: 82 for the factors that help to raise the age at marriage). It is a good idea to complete Reflection and Action 11.2 exercise for gathering your own mini database on age at marriage in India.

Reflection and Action 11.2

Interview at least fifty married persons of your family and in your neighbourhood on the following aspects of marriage. Please make sure to include at least fifty percent women in your sample of fifty persons. Note down each person's age, sex, educational qualifications and religion before you ask her/ him the questions.

- i) Has any one in your family remained unmarried after the age of 35? If, yes, what are the reasons for this?
- ii) At what age did you get married? Relate the answers to what has been discussed in the unit, and find out if the person remained unmarried by choice or by necessity. That is to say has he/she taken a voluntary decision to remain single? Or, has the person remained unmarried because of reasons like physical defects, poor economic status of the family or dowry etc.? Secondly, find out reasons for the person's marriage at an age much below or above the minimum legal age at marriage. Compare your answers with those given by other students at your study center and basing on your findings, write a short essay of one thousand words on 'age at marriage in my family and neighbourhood'.

11.5 Rules Regulating Marriage

In all societies we find ways of regulating who may not marry whom and who may marry whom.

Incest rules

The rules of incest decide who is outside the category of those one can marry. Can you quickly count up to ten such persons whom you are not allowed to marry under any circumstances? If yes, you already know about incest rules. Incest refers to sexual union of near kin.

Positive (endogamy) and negative (exogamy) rules

There are positive and negative rules of marriage to determine the unit within which one should marry and the unit within which one must not marry. The positive rules pertain to the unit of endogamy within which one can marry. In India, among the Hindus this refers by and large to one's caste or sub-caste.

The negative rules pertain to the unit of exogamy within which one must not marry. Among the higher caste Hindus, this unit is one's gotra, within which one is not allowed to marry (for the four clan rule of *gotra* exogamy see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme). Do you remember reading in the newspapers reports about marriages between persons of the same gotra? Local caste panchayats have reportedly taken action against such couples though the courts have upheld their marriages. Such cases are indicators of changes in the perceptions of people about rules of marriage. Even the unit of endogamy is no longer a universally accepted unit of positive rules of marriage. For a detailed discussion of the rules of endogamy including the rule of hypergamy and hypogamy see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme.

Inter-caste/inter-religion/same sex marriages

You must have noticed many inter-caste and inter-religion marriages taking place in modern times. In legal terms all such marriages are valid and in social terms too they are fast gaining full recognition. As long as marriages follow the norms of heterosexual unions, society in India is culturally accepting such marriages. Indeed as mentioned before, there are yet more alternate forms of marital unions reportedly taking place in India and we have to wait and watch their fate in our socio-cultural milieu. Such unions relate to two persons of same sex deciding to live as husband and wife. It is not clear

what terms we should be using to describe such relationships. It is apparent that the current predominance of heteronormativity in marriage relationships leaves little scope for exploring different forms of relationships. One is not sure if queer or marginalised sexualities can occupy a recognisable space in the mainstream culture.

The case of migrant tribals

I would also mention at this point the little mentioned situation with regard to tribal populations in India. With the erosion of the socio-cultural fabric and traditional economic structures of most tribal groups in India, we find them occupying spaces available to migrant labour. Staying back in native territories means to them the spectre of starvation and moving out in search of livelihood gives them subsistence at survival level. In the midst of this scenario, most migrant tribal women labourers continue to live with the constant fear of sexual abuse. Will it then make any sense if we were to discuss different forms of marriage traditionally found among the tribal communities of India? In this context, you can usefully look at the case-studies carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, by Banerjee 1987, Mitra 1987, and the study by Schenk-Sandbergen 1995 and by Sen 1995 on migrant tribal women.

Rules applicable to married adults

Besides the above issues, we need to also consider those rules, which regulate the conduct of already married persons. The negative rules are those of adultery that restrict sexual access to those already married. You may observe the positive side of rules in polygamous and the levirate or sororate or Islamic short-term marriage (*mut'a*), whereby already married persons have sexual access to specified married persons.

Breaking rules of marriage

Discussions of rules of marriage throw better light on basic structures and processes when we study them in the context of the rules being broken. For example effectiveness of caste or sub-caste endogamy can be judged only by looking at the number of inter-caste marriages and their 'sooner or later' acceptance by the kin group. In this connexion, the interface between caste and class gains relevance and the relative class status of the spouse is often a sufficient condition to render an inter-caste marriage more acceptable in due course. Further, increase in the number of so-called urban villages has made inroads into the levels of socio-cultural acceptance of the deviant behaviour of the younger generation.

In India we find the commonly listed forms of marriage such as monogamy (marriage of a man to a woman at a time), and polygamy (marriage of a man or woman to more than one spouse). The latter, that is polygamy with its two forms, namely, polygyny (marriage of a man to several women at a time) and polyandry (marriage of a woman to several men at a time) is also prevalent in different parts of the country. For a detailed account of the various forms of marriage in India see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme. In ancient texts of the Hindus we find references to eight forms of marriage (For details see unit 15 on Hindu Social Organisation in Block 4 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme). These forms refer basically to the methods by which a spouse is acquired.

Let us now take a brief look at the patterns of selecting one's spouse. Before moving on to the discussion of spouse selection, let us complete Reflection and Action 11.3 for grasping the nature of changes occurring in the patterns of marriage in India.

Reflection and Action 11.3

Carry out a mini survey of fifty to seventy households in the area where you live. Select the households on the basis of a random sample. Visit the selected households and ask the following questions to whoever in the family is willing to answer them. Before asking the questions, note down details about the respondent, like the caste/ sub-caste, class, region, religion, mother tongue, nationality and any other factor that you may like to include.

Questions

How many ever-married persons live in the household?

What was the form (referring to inter-caste/ inter-religion etc) of marriage of each married person?

Based on your findings, write an essay of one thousand words on "Rules of Marriage Observed in My Area".

11.6 Patterns of Spouse Selection

The phenomenon of arranged marriage

It is a general perception among all of us that most marriages in India are fixed or arranged by parents or elders on behalf of and/or with the consent of the boy or the girl involved in marriage. We give this pattern of selecting a spouse, the label of 'arranged marriage'. In contrast to marriage by self-choice, this pattern of spouse selection is deemed to be an arranged process. In popular usage a marriage by self-choice is known as 'love marriage'. You may also find in some cases both patterns of spouse selection. There seems to be some arbitrariness about the usage of the two terms. Shah (2005: 22) has made a perceptive observation about arranged marriages.

We presume that there was no choice in arranged marriages in traditional India. Of course, in a regime of child marriage a child did not have a choice. This does not, however, mean that the child's parents and other elders did not have alternatives to choose from. Conversely, in the so-called love marriages among adults in a certain section of society today choice is restricted by a number of social factors.

With the above comment in mind you can discuss the prevalence of arranged marriages in India in relation to

- i) the rules of endogamy (pertaining to caste/ sub-caste among the Hindus), which limit marriage alliance within certain groups.
- ii) the rules of exogamy which disallow marriage within *gotra* among the higher caste Hindus.
- iii) regulations about positive/ prescriptive (allowing) and negative/ proscriptive (prohibiting) rules about marriage with parallel and cross-cousins among the Hindu/ Muslim and Christian sections among speakers of Dravidian languages.
- iv) customs, which indicate a specific preference for marriage between certain types of relatives or groups, especially among the tribal groups.

All the above factors make arranged marriages the somewhat more desirable pattern of selection of spouse. For a good number of high caste Hindus, matching of horoscope (charts relating to one's birth under certain astrological calculations) constitutes an important element in the final choice of the marriage partner. With the advent of information technology tools and their easy availability, apart from astrologers matching the horoscopes of a boy and a girl, computers are used to match horoscopes. Application of information technology can be seen in the proliferation of websites dealing with matchmaking.

Marriage by self-choice

In the light of raised age at marriage, prescribed by law, and easy access to information technology for finding a spouse, it is relatively easy for the concerned boy/ girl to find a spouse by self-choice. The traditionally placed restrictions on free interaction between a boy and a girl in India are now almost impossible to enforce and this is yet another factor which has given impetus to marriage by self-choice.

The measure of participation in choosing one's life partner shows variations between different groups. For example, among the Muslims, by and large, the parents, elders or *wali* (guardian) arrange a marriage (Gazetteer of India 1965: 547 and CSWI 1974: 62). But owing to forces of modernisation along with the spread of education in minority communities, self-choice in selecting one's spouse is equally prevalent in their cases too.

Blumberg and Dwarki (1980: 139) found the following patterns of spouse selection in India.

- i) Marriage by parents'/elders' choice without consulting either the boy or girl
- ii) Marriage by self-choice without consulting parents/ elders
- iii) Marriage by self-choice but with parents' consent
- iv) Marriage by parents' choice but with the consent of both the boy and the girl involved in the marriage
- v) Marriage by parents' choice but with the consent of only one of the two partners involved.

Very often, parents/ elders consult the boy and obtain his consent in the choice of spouse. Often, parents/elders do not consider it important to ask the girl whether she approves of the match. Among the urban educated classes arranged marriage with the consent of the boy and the girl appears to be the most preferred pattern. Very often the parents and sometimes the boy/ girl concerned arrange the marriage through newspaper advertisement.

11.7 Marriage Rituals and Status

Wedding ceremonies and rites

Marriage in India, like everywhere else in the world, entails some rites and ceremonies. Of course, variations exist in rites not only in terms of religion but also in terms of caste, sect and rural/ urban residence. For descriptions of some of the basic rites in a few communities in India see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme.

Wedding processions and feasts are generally common features of wedding celebrations of all communities in India. Their scale generally follows the socio-economic status of the families of the bride and bridegroom.

You may occasionally find certain sections or groups of people who do not have religious rites in marriage. Such marriages are referred to as customary marriages, which include quite simple practices. For example, among some groups living in the Himalayan tract, putting a ring in the bride's nose is a customary form of marriage. Customary forms of marriage are generally features of those groups, which permit and practice divorce and secondary marriages. The secondary marriage of a widow or a separated or divorced woman has a simple ceremony to indicate the renewal of her married status (CSWI 1974: 83).

The Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides for secular and civil marriage before a registrar. This Act applies to all Indian citizens who chose to make use of its provisions, irrespective of religious affiliations. Civil marriage enables persons to avoid the expense of traditional weddings. All the same, weddings are generally an expensive affair for a large majority of people. Let us examine in the next section why weddings continue to initiate a larger cycle of exchange of material and non-material aspects of status.

Marriage and status

We find that in most societies, so also in India, wedding ritual and ceremonies involve both material as well as non-material transactions between the bride-giver and the bride-taker. Such transactions reflect the social structure of the concerned society. Barring some exceptions (relating mainly to matrilineal societies) you would notice that there is the transfer of the wife to her husband's family.

Besides the transfer of the wife, there are two major types of transfers of material wealth that accompany marriage. In one, wealth travels in the opposite direction of the bride and in another it travels along with the bride in the same direction. The former is identified as bride price and the latter as dowry (CSWI 1974:69). The following figure from Barnard and Good (1984: 115) shows the movement of goods in relation to women in both bridewealth and dowry.

Certain patrilineal tribes and some castes in the middle and lower rungs of the caste ladder practice the custom of brideprice. For details about variations in the form and amount of bride price, from region to region, from tribe to tribe and within a tribe from time to time see CSWI (1974: 68-72). Sharma (1980) has shown that in some parts of North India bargaining for brideprice is quite common. In some tribes, the bride's father gets the services of the groom as a form of brideprice. For instances of such 'bride-service' in other parts of the world see Barnard and Good (1984: 134-136). Mair (1971: 50) in the context of societies in Africa, and Goody (1976: 8) in a general context, hold that brideprice and bridewealth do not refer to an exchange of goods by the bride and groom. They refer to the exchange units that is the families of the bride and groom, respectively. For a somewhat long discussion of the usage of the two terms, 'brideprice' and 'bridewealth' see Barnard and Good (1984: 115-117). Goody (1973: 2 and 1976: 11) uses the term 'indirect dowry' for the transfers which involve the property passing from the groom (or other members of his family) to the bride herself. In the Indian context, we

call the same by the term *stidhanam*. Goody finds it wrong to label such prestations as brideprice. This brings us to the discussion of dowry or direct dowry.

Dowry

In broad terms, dowry involves the transfer of valuable gifts from the bride's side to the groom's side. Such a transfer of wealth is perceived to confer prestige and honour to both the sides. The bride-giver gains prestige within his community by giving dowry while the bride-taker receives both wealth and prestige in his own and other communities.

In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act. In 1984 and again in 1986, the Government amended the Act to make the law more stringent and effective. For instance, the husband and his family can be penalised for demanding dowry if his bride dies within seven years of the marriage in other than normal circumstance. There is a Dowry Prohibition Cell to look into complaints about dowry.

The legal provisions do not imply the end of marriages with dowry. Though there are progressive young people who voice their strong opinion against dowry and marry without it; there are at the same time, young, educated people who accept this practice and see no harm in it. Some get away by saying that it is their parents (whose wishes they never want to disobey) who perpetuate this practice. Demand for dowry exists among other communities, like the Muslim and Christian. Often, continuous demand for dowry even after marriage causes discord in the family, leading to divorce. Let us look at the issues of divorce and remarriage in India in the next section.

Before moving on to the next section, let us complete the Reflection and Action 11.4 for constructing our own perception of the custom of dowry in India.

Reflection and Action 11.4

As reported by the 'Hindu' of 4th May 2005 (page 15), with reference to a public interest litigation, a three-Judge Bench directed 'the Centre and the States to consider framing of rules to compel men seeking government employment to furnish information whether they had taken dowry, if so, whether the dowry had been made over to wife as contemplated under the Act. The rules could also ask such information from those already in government service'. Further, the report says, "The court asked the State Governments to give wide publicity to Sections 3 and 4 of the Rules providing for the maintenance of lists of presents or gifts to the bride and bridegroom and to appoint a sufficient number of dowry prohibition officers with independent charge in each district of the State concerned; to take steps to step up anti-dowry literacy among the people".

Find out if your own family or a family known to you, gave or took dowry at the time of a marriage in the family. In the light of your findings and the above excerpt about latest efforts to promote the anti-dowry movement, write a short note of five hundred words on "Persistence of Dowry in Our Society", highlighting the causes and consequences of taking and giving dowry.

11.8 Dissolution of Marriage

You read at the beginning of Unit 11 that it is not easy to define ‘marriage’ with precision, so also correspondingly it is not easy to define ‘divorce’ in clear terms, except saying that only those who marry can opt for divorce. Often, breakdown in a marriage is not a one time event. It happens in stages. We need to carefully study the circumstances under which it is possible to seek divorce and its particular mode acceptable in the context of a particular society. Mitchell (1961: 323) holds that there is general correlation between marriage stability, “genetical rights” over offspring, and the form of descent. Barnard and Good (1984: 119) conclude,

All things being equal, marriage should be stable and of long duration in patrilineal societies where such rights are vested in corporate descent groups; of medium duration and stability in unilineal societies wherein these rights are held by individuals rather than corporate groups; and of short duration and low stability in matrilineal societies where genetical rights are never transferred out with corporate groups, and in “bilateral societies” where such rights are irrelevant.

The above quotation provides us with a reasonable basis for constructing hypotheses in the context of particular societies for studying the issue of dissolution of marriage.

a) Divorce

The possibilities and mechanisms of dissolving a marital union have varied through time, between and within communities. For details of the how, when and what of divorce in different communities in India, see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU’s B A programme.

We need to make a special note of the efforts on the part of Muslim organisations in India to bring about changes in the practice of ‘triple *talaq*’ (refer to section in Unit 11 our earlier mention of a model ‘Nikah-Nama’). Sharma (2005: 15) reported in the ‘Hindu’ of 4th May 2005,

Hasina Khan of Awaz-e-Niswan, who represents one of several groups that have lobbied for a model ‘nikahnama’, told the ‘Hindu’ that the document presented by the AIMPLB was “ridiculous” and also “dangerous”. She said that although the model ‘nikahnama’ does advise men to avoid divorce and the practice of saying ‘talaq’ in one sitting does not rule out that it is incorrect. “There has been no basic reform,” she said.

Disturbed by the tenor of reforms in the name of a model ‘nikahnama’, Muskaan, a woman activist, according to the ‘Hindu’ of 7th May 2005, “tore the model ‘nikahnama’ drafted by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) in Bhopal”. The debate over Muslim women’s rights has brought to the forefront the fact of women being treated as second-class citizens. The fact that AIMPLB has come out with a somewhat more flexible approach to the question of divorce shows that there is some space for negotiation and arbitration. These developments symbolise the transformation that we need to focus on while studying changing patterns of marriage in India.

Recognition of divorce leads us to the next logical step of the remarriage of a divorcee, and also of a widowed person.

b) Remarriage

Remarriage in the case of a divorcee or a widowed person is a matter of concern in almost all sections of the Indian population. The increase in the rate of divorce has given rise in the rate of second marriage for both men and women in India.

The state of being a widow/widower is a direct outcome of the death of a married person and this necessitates an examination of the rights, restrictions and duties entailing this state for both a man and a woman. For instance, Fuller (1979: 463) has reported that Brahman widowers cannot work as temple priests. Sharma (1980: 53-54) has observed that in parts of North India, as per custom (not legally), a widow without children may not inherit property. It reverts to her husband's natal family. Existence of many negative sanctions imposed on widows may encourage them to remarry. Many groups that did not earlier allow widows to re-marry, have now given more flexibility in this matter. For detailed accounts of widow and widower remarriage see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B.A. programme.

While summing up this section, you should consider the customary ban on remarriage of widows of higher castes among the Hindus. Those with education and relative affluence, thereby higher social status, do not observe such customs and the law of the land permits such marriages.

Remarriage brings into existence a variety of step-relationships. It is important to pay attention to the sociological aspects of such relationships. The data to collect is to be with reference to terms of referring to and terms of addressing such relatives as well as the rights to inheritance of stepsiblings. Children born and brought up in a nuclear family setting have been reported to find it a welcome extension of close relatives to socialise with. These impressions need to be explored in in-depth sociological studies.

11.9 Conclusion

Unit 11 focused on changing aspects of marriage in India. At the same time it discussed common and diverse features of marriage in different communities of the country. We raised the question about universality of marriage in India and pointed out the trends indicating deeper changes in the institution of marriage. In almost all aspects of marriage, namely, age at marriage, rules regulating marriage, patterns of spouse selection, wedding ceremonies and rites, issues of status and dissolution of marriage and occurrence of remarriage, we concentrated on the nature of changes taking place in the context of marriage in India.

11.10 Further Reading

Uberoi, Patricia 1993. *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

Jain, Shobhita 1996. *Bharat mein Parivar, Vivah aur Natedari*. Rawat Publications: Jaipur (chapters two to seven dealing with marriage and its changing patterns in North, North-east and South India).

Unit 12

Descent and Alliance Approaches to the Study of Kinship in India

Contents

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Application of Descent Theory to the Study of Kinship System in North India
- 12.3 Application of Alliance Theory to the Study of Kinship System in South India
- 12.4 Conclusion
- 12.5 Further Reading
- Appendix 1

Learning Objectives

After reading Unit 12, it is expected that you would be able to:

- Explain the descent and alliance theories (given in Appendix 1 attached to Unit 12), which some scholars have used to study the kinship systems of North and South India;
- Examine the application of the two approaches to the study of kinship systems in India; and
- Understand clearly that in unit 12, the discussion of the two approaches to the study of kinship systems refers to the patterns found among the numerically dominant Hindu population.

12.1 Introduction

Units 9, 10 and 11 have provided you an understanding of the social institutions of family, household and marriage in India. In order to fully understand the social relationships involved in family and marriage we need to raise our level of cognition to yet another level of abstraction, namely, rules, norms and patterns that govern the construction of social relationships in family and marriage. These are kinship rules, norms and patterns.

In India, a country of immense diversity in its regions and communities, we find a wide range of kinship systems and it is not easy to present an overall picture of these kinship systems. We may make an effort to talk about the two major geographical regions, the north and south of the country. Even the sociological literature has highlighted features of North and South Indian kinship systems. This does not imply that there are no other varieties of kinship systems in some parts of both North and South India (for details of such systems see Jain 1996: 151-270 and Uberoi 1994).

In order to study the North and South Indian kinship systems, sociologists have followed some approaches and Unit 12 discusses the application of descent and alliance approaches to the study of kinship systems in North and South India (for familiarising yourself with basic concepts in the study of kinship systems and descent and alliance theories of kinship, you need to read Appendix 1 before reading Unit 12). For a comparative perspective of kinship systems in North and South India you can refer Unit 9 Kinship II in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B A Programme).

12.2 Application of Descent Theory to the Study of Kinship System in North India

For purposes of describing the kinship systems found in India, Irawati Karve (1953: 93) identified four cultural zones, namely the Northern, the Central, the Southern and the Eastern zones. You can locate the northern zone, according to Karve, between the Himalayas to the north and the Vindhya ranges to the south. In this region, the majority of the people speak languages derived from Sanskrit. Some of the main languages spoken in the region are Hindi, Bihari, Sindhi, Punjabi, Assamese and Bengali. In such a large region, you cannot say that there exists just one kinship system. The differences of language, history and culture have brought about a high degree of variation within the region. You may, however, try to look at the pattern of kinship organisations of the communities in this region on the basis of broad and general features. You can describe the basic structure and process of kinship system in this area in terms of four features (mentioned in Appendix 1), namely (A) kinship groups, (B) kinship terminology (C) marriage rules, and (D) ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin. Let us take up each of these features to discuss the kinship system in North India.

A) Kinship groups

Sociological studies in various parts of North India show that social groups, such as i) patrilineage, ii) clan, iii) caste/subcaste and sometimes also iv) fictive kinship provide the basis for cooperation or conflict among the people and therefore we now discuss each of these groups.

i) Patrilineage:

You can say that broadly speaking unilineal descent groups are the basis of kinship organisation in North India. When you trace the lineage membership of a group on the basis of shared descent in one line, you can name it a unilineal descent group. In North India, you find mostly patrilineal descent groups. This means that you trace the descent in the male line from father to son. Members of patrilineages cooperate as well as fight in various situations. Let us find out how this takes place in terms of a) cooperation, b) conflict and c) inheritance of status and property.

a) Cooperation:

Members of a patrilineage cooperate in ritual and economic activities. They participate together in life cycle rituals. In settlement of disputes, the senior men of the lineage try to sort out the matter within the lineage. Cooperation among lineage members is strengthened because they live close together in the same village. As the farm-lands of lineage members are normally located in the same village, they set up their houses almost next to each other. In this situation, there is constant exchange of material resources from the household of one member to another. Lewis (1958: 22-23), Minturn and Hitchcock (1963: 237), Berreman (1963: 173) and Nicholas (1962: 174) describe the pattern of co-operation in their studies of kinship patterns in North India. From their studies of the kinship systems you can say that these studies follow the descent approach because they examine the pattern of cooperation and conflict in descent groups.

b) Conflict:

Lineage members help each other, but fights or conflicts also characterise kinship relations among them. For example, T.N. Madan (1965: 201) shows

how in a Kashmir village, rivalry among brothers leads to partition of the joint family. Later, this rivalry takes more intense form in the relationships between the children of brothers.

c) Inheritance of status and property:

Transmission of status and property from one generation to the next takes place according to certain rules. In North India, the status and property generally pass in the male line. In other words, you find a predominantly patrilineal mode of inheritance in North India. For this reason, the composition of patrilineage becomes very important. The lineage members cooperate for economic and jural reasons. They share jural rights and therefore they cooperate in order to continue possessing the rights. They also fight among themselves about who is to get more benefits from those rights. Pradhan (1965) has described how the Jats and other landowners of Meerut and other districts around Delhi have a certain portion of the village lands and how it cannot be transferred out of the lineage. To keep the land within the lineage, its male members have to remain united. Land ownership in this case becomes the main principle of their social organisation.

After discussing patrilineage as a characteristic feature of kinship groups in North India, you can now move to the discussion of clans, the second feature of kinship groups in North India.

- ii) **Clan:** A lineage is an exogamous unit. This means that a boy and a girl of the same lineage cannot marry. A larger exogamous category is called the clan. Among the Hindus, this category is known as *gotra*. Each person of a higher caste among the Hindus belongs to the clan of his/her father and cannot marry within the clan or *gotra*. One usually knows about the common ancestor of lineage members as an actual person. But the common ancestor of a clan is generally a mythical figure. In rural areas, often the members of a lineage live in close proximity and therefore have greater occasions for cooperation or conflict. Common interests or actions do not characterise the relationships among clan members because they are usually scattered over a larger territory and their relationships are often quite remote. You would observe that it is common to find these relationships assuming significance only in the context of marriage. That is why we will now discuss caste/ sub-castes as the third characteristic feature of kinship groups in North India. Castes/ subcastes are the endogamous units within which marriage takes place.
- iii) **Caste and subcaste:** Besides lineages and clans, the kinship system operates within the families of the caste groups, living in one village or a nearby cluster of villages. As mentioned earlier, castes are endogamous, i.e., one marries within one's caste and people belonging to one caste group are kinsmen in the sense that they are already related or can be potentially related to each other. Caste-fellows generally come forward to help each other when others challenge their honour and status. They may also hold rituals together and help each other economically.

Subcaste is the largest segment of caste and it performs nearly all the functions of caste, such as endogamy and social control. In this respect, you can say that the internal structure of the subcaste would provide you the framework within which you can observe the operation of the kinship system. The members of a subcaste cooperate as kinspersons. They, depending on the context, work together as equals in the sphere of ritual activities and political

allies in socio-economic activities (for examples of the studies of subcaste see Box 12.3).

Box 12.1 and 12.2 are part of Annexure 1 at the back of the unit.

Box 12.3: Examples of the Studies of Subcaste

Vidyarthi (1961: 53-57), in his study of a very small subcaste, has shown that it is possible to trace one's relationship with most members of the subcaste. On the other hand, in the case of a subcaste spreading over many villages, one may be limited to maintaining relations with only a part of the total number of kin.

Klass (1966) in his study of marriage rules in Bengal calls a subcaste as one's 'effective *jati*'. This refers to all those people of the sub-caste with whom one actually has relationships of cooperation or conflict.

Among the subcaste kin, we need to also include those related to a person through marriage. Here, generally a person's kin through the mother are called uterine kin and those through the spouse are known as affinal kin. These relatives are not members of one's family or lineage or clan. They are expected to help and support a person and, actually do so when an occasion arises for such an action. While a person belongs to only one lineage, one clan or one sub-caste, the person would always have a string of relatives who do not belong to the person's lineage/clan/sub-caste.

We have already mentioned how sociologists like Radcliffe-Brown (1958), followed the descent approach to study kinship systems, and explained the fact of a special place of the relationship between a person and his/her mother's brother.

At the end of our discussion of kinship groups in North India, it is not out of place to mention two more sets of relationships, which assume significance in some situations. They pertain to fictive kin relationships and the relationships one maintains with step-siblings and other step-relatives.

Fictive kin and step relatives: You need to also mention, in passing, the recognition of fictive kinship among both urban dwellers and villagers. Often, people who are not related either by descent or marriage, form the bonds of fictive kinship with each other. We find the evidence of such a practice in many tribal and village studies. You may refer to the studies by B. Bandopadhyay (1955), L. Dube (1956), S.C. Dube (1951), S.K. Srivastava (1960) and L.K. Mahapatra (1968, 1969). On the basis of common residence in a village in North India, unrelated individuals may usually behave like brothers (see Box 12.4 for an explanation of fictive kin relationships). Similarly, residents in a Mumbai chawl, hailing from a common place of origin, may behave like a clan group.

Box 12.4: An Explanation of Fictive Kin Relationships

Mahapatra (1969) points out that fictive kinship is a mechanism to provide kin-like mannerisms to those who are not ordinarily found to be so related in a particular situation. For example, in North India, where village **exogamy** is a normal practice, it is rare to find a brother to a daughter-in-law living in the same locality. She can get a brother only through a fictive relationship.

In the urban context, you must have frequently come across small children who call any older man 'uncle' and an older woman 'aunty'. This shows how easily we make use of kinship idiom in our day-to-day behaviour towards total strangers. These transitory relationships do not however assume much importance in terms of actual kin ties and behaviour associated with them.

There are hardly any sociological studies of kin relationships among step-siblings and other step-relatives. This is a new area for exploration for sociologists of the younger generation.

We will now discuss characteristic features of the second aspect of kinship system in North India, namely kinship terminology.

B) Kinship terminology

Let us find out how an analysis of the various kinship terms used in the linguistic regions of the northern zone would help us to understand the kinship structure, its make-up and the behaviour associated with each term. We will first take up i) the descriptive nature of North Indian kinship terms and then discuss ii) social behaviour and kinship terms signifying social behaviour.

i) Descriptive nature of North Indian kinship terms

The kinship terminology is the expression of kinship relations in linguistic terms. In the case of North India, we can call the system of terminology as descriptive. This is because the kinship terms generally describe the relationship from the point of view of the speaker. In a few words, even the most distant kin relationships can be accurately described. Unlike the English terms, uncle, aunty, cousin, which do not reveal age, patrilineal/ matrilineal ties, the North Indian kinship terms are very clear. For example, when we say *chachera bhai*, it can be easily translated as father's younger brother's (*chacha's*) son, who stands in the relationship of a brother (*bhai*) to the speaker. Similarly, *mamera bhai* means mother's brother's (*mama's*) son. According to Dumont (1966: 96), the North Indian kinship terminology is descriptive in the sense that it describes elementary relationships in three steps starting from Ego or the speaker.

Step 1: The elementary relationships of filiation upwards and downwards, siblingship (sister/ brother) and marriage comprise the first set of terms.

Step 2: Then we have the relationships of the second order. These are formed by combining two elementary relationships, i.e. filiation + filiation, filiation + siblingship, siblingship + filiation, marriage + filiation, marriage + siblingship.

Step 3: The third order of relationships is represented by filiation + marriage + filiation. Further, for Dumont (1966), the North Indian kinship terminology is not a classificatory type of terminology because it does not classify the kinship terms according to the number of principles of opposition. All the same, to emphasise the patrilineal descent, North Indian kinship terminology observes a clear-cut distinction between parallel and cross-cousins. The children of one's brother are *bhatija* (for male child) and *bhatiji* (for female child). The children of one's sister are *bhanja* (for male child) and *bhanji* (for female child). A person's parallel relatives are members of his/her descent

group and therefore they also live nearby in the same village. In contrast, a person's sister's children or cross relatives are members of a different descent group. They are also residents of a different place. This distinction between brother's children and sister's children, which is made in the North Indian kinship terminology, is also of importance in the context of kinship system in South India (about this we will discuss later in this Unit). Now we see how kinship terms signify social behaviour.

ii) Social behaviour and kinship terms signifying social behaviour

Irawati Karve (1953) gave a list of kinship terms in North Indian languages. She made use of kinship terminologies to describe and compare kinship systems in various parts of India. She studied the terms and also used the findings for understanding the influences, which played a part in shaping them (see Box 12.5 for another example).

Box 12.5: Analysis of Indo-Aryan Kinship Terms by G. S. Ghurye

Besides Irawati Karve, we can also give another example of the analysis of Indo-Aryan kinship terms made by G.S. Ghurye (1946, 1955). He highlighted the jural and ideological aspects of kinship systems through a comparison of kinship terms in North Indian languages. For example, among the Sarjupari Brahmins the term 'maan' refers to the bride-taker. In ideological terms, 'maan' reflects the high status of the bride-taker as compared to the bride-giver. In jural terms it denotes the fact that bride-takers do not share property with the bride-givers (for a discussion of the term 'maan' see Jain 1996).

The very usage of kinship terms also makes clear the kind of behaviour expected from a kin. For example, Oscar Lewis (1958: 189), in his study of a North Indian village, described the pattern and relationship between a person and his elder brother's wife. This is popularly known as *Devar-Bhabhi* relationship, which is characteristically a joking relationship.

A contrast to this 'joking' relationship is the behaviour of avoidance between a woman and her husband's father. Similarly, she has to avoid her husband's elder brother. The term for husband's father is *shvasur* and for husband's elder brother is *bhasur*. *Bhasur* is a combination of the Sanskrit word *bhratr* (brother) and *shvasur* (father-in-law), and is, therefore, referring to a person like the father-in-law.

Let us at this stage complete a 'Reflection and Action Exercise' to grasp the linkages between kinship terms and social behaviour.

Reflection and Action 12.4

Write down the kinship terms in your language for the following relationships.

Father, father's brother, Father's brother's son, Father's father, Father's father's brother's son, Brother, Brother's son, Mother's brother, Mother's father, Mother's brother's son, Mother's sister, Mother's sister's husband, Father's sister, Father's sister's husband.

Now, distinguish your consanguines and affines among these relatives. Next, write each set of relationships in short form. In addition, highlight the clear-cut distinctions, if any, between the relatives as reflecting in the kinship terms in your language. Finally, work out if any of the above kin terms explicitly connote either 'joking' or avoidance relationship.

C) Marriage Rules

Every time a marriage takes place, new kinship bonds come into being. This shows you clearly the relevance of marriage rules for discussing the patterns of kinship organisation. In the context of North India, you find that people have a good idea of categories of people one cannot marry. In sociological terms, you can express this norm by saying that there are negative rules of marriage in North India. You can also say that marriage is allowed only outside a defined limit. Later we will also talk about the limits within which marriage is permitted to take place.

Rules of exogamy

Let us see first find out what the limit or the rule of exogamy is in North India and what is the four clan rule that sets another limit of exogamy in North India.

i) Clan Exogamy

Marriage shows very clearly the boundaries of one's natal descent line. No man is allowed to marry a daughter of his patriline. In North India lineage ties upto five or six generations are generally remembered and marriage alliances are not allowed within this range. In such a situation the lineage turns into the clan and we speak of *gotra* (clan) and *gotra bhai* (clan mates). Widely used Sanskrit term *gotra* is an exogamous category within a subcaste. Its main use is to regulate marriages within a subcaste. Two persons of similar *gotra* cannot tie the knot.

Apart from the clan exogamy, there is also the four clan rule to draw a line to separate those men and women, who can and cannot marry each other.

ii) The four clan rule

In Irawati Karve's (1953: 118) words, according to this rule, a man must not marry a woman from (i) his father's *gotra*, (ii) his mother's *gotra*, (iii) his father's mother's *gotra*, and (iv) his mother's mother's *gotra*. In other words, this rule prohibits marriage between two persons who share any two of their eight *gotra* links. This means that the rule of exogamy goes beyond one's own lineage. Another related kind of exogamy, which exists in North India, is village exogamy. A village usually has members of one or two lineages living in it. Members belonging to the same lineage are not permitted to intermarry.

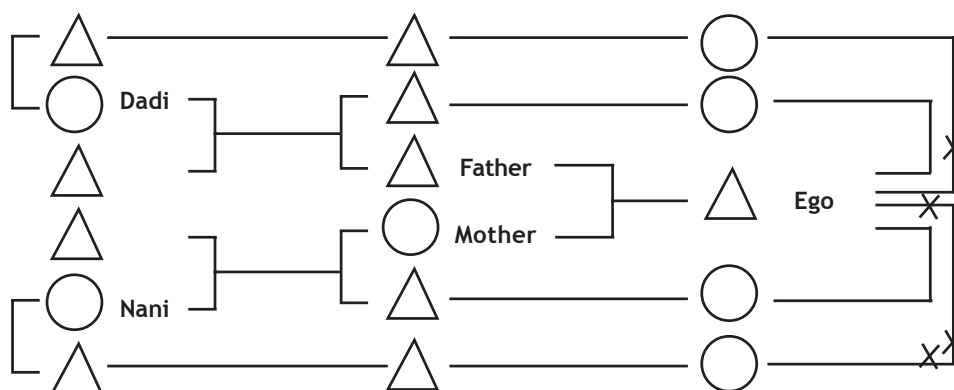


Fig. 12.3: The Four – Clan Rule

This principle extends even to the villages, which have more than two lineages. In other words, a boy and a girl in a village in North India are like a brother and sister and hence cannot intermarry.

It is important here to give you a word of caution. We have spoken about lineage, clan and subcaste in relation to organisation of kinship patterns. But we have not mentioned the terms like *kutumb*, *biradari*, *khandan*, *bhai bandh* etc. These denote various colloquial meanings of the general terms (lineage, clan and subcaste) in local languages. The local terms are used in various contexts to signify different levels of kinship arrangements. In our discussion, we have limited ourselves to social structure and function in broad terms and avoided conflicting usages of local terms.

Let us now look at the groups within which marriage is preferred/prescribed, in the context of North India. This refers to the rules of endogamy.

Rules of endogamy

As mentioned earlier, the kinship system operates within the families of the caste groups living in one village or a nearby cluster of villages. Castes are endogamous. This means that one marries within one's caste. Let us look at the rules of marriage within one's caste/ sub-caste.

Marriages within the sub-caste

Associated with local terms is the idea of the status of various units within the subcaste. Taking the example of the Sarjupari Brahmin of Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh, studied by Louis Dumont (1966: 107), we find that each of the three subcastes of Sarjupari Brahmins of this area is divided into three 'houses' (kin groups or lineages), which range hierarchically in status. The marriages are always arranged from lower to higher 'house'. This means that women are always given to the family, which is placed in the 'house' above her 'house'. In this context, we can also refer to the popular saying in North India that 'the creeper must not go back'. The same idea is reflected by another North Indian saying that '*pao pujke, ladki nahin lejaing*' (i.e. once we have washed the feet of the bridegroom during the wedding ceremony, we cannot accept a girl from his family, because this will mean that we allow that side to wash our feet or allow the reversal of relationships). This shows clearly that marriage rules among Brahmins and other higher castes in North India maintain a hierarchic relationship between the bride-givers and bride-takers. In terms of negative rules of marriage in North India, the above description reflects the rule that a man cannot marry his father's sister's daughter or his patrilateral cross-cousin. This is called the rule of no reversal and can be shown in a diagram like this:

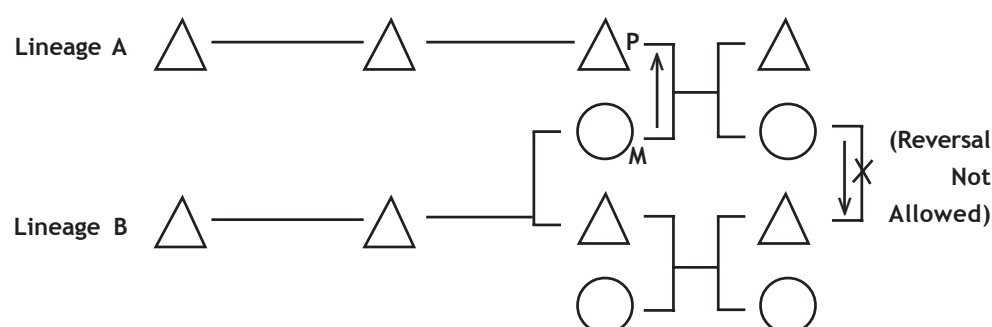


Fig. 12.4: The Rule of No Reversal

Lineage B has given the woman (M) in marriage to the man (P) of lineage A. P is given the high ritual status of 'pao puj' in marriage ceremonies. If P's daughter is married to the man of lineage B, then P will have to give the same high ritual status to the man of lineage B. But lineage B is, according to the rule of hypergamy, lower to lineage A and therefore, this marriage will be a reversal of roles. In North India, such a reversal is not allowed and thus, we find the rule of prohibition on marriage with patrilateral cross-cousins.

Another principle should also be mentioned here and this is the rule of no repetition. This means that if the father's sister has been married in a family (*khandan*), one's own sister cannot be given in marriage to that same family (Dumont 1966: 104-7). The term family or *khandan* is here used as a smaller unit of a lineage. This rule of no repetition implies the negative rule of prohibition on the marriage with matrilineal cross-cousins. In other words, a man cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter. This can be depicted in a simple kinship diagram like this:

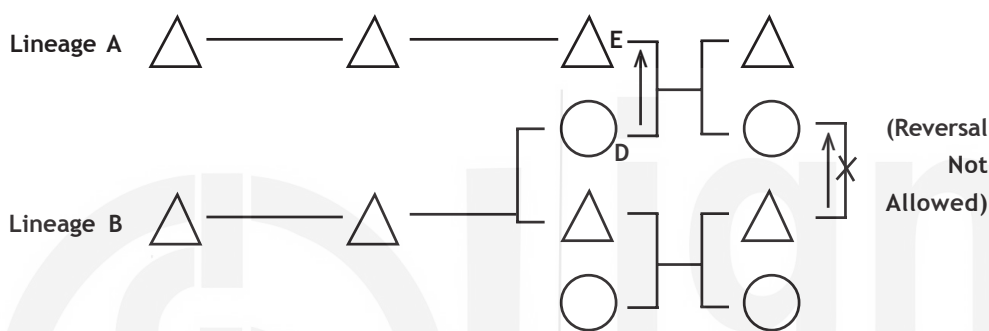


Fig. 12.5: The Rule of No Repetition

Lineage B has given woman D in marriage to the man E of lineage A. In the next generation, if a woman is again given in marriage to a man of lineage A, then a repetition will occur. A prohibition on repetition shows that matrilineal cross-cousin marriage is barred in North India. Thus, we find that both patrilateral and matrilineal cross-cousin marriages are not allowed in North India. In other words, the two rules- the rule of no reversal and the rule of no repetition- put together define the negative rules of marriage in North India.

Highlighting the structural implications of marriage rules in North India, T.N. Madan (1965) in his study of the Kashmiri Pandits distinguishes three classes of wife-givers and wife-takers (these are the terms used by T.N. Madan in the place of bride-taker and bride-giver, used in this unit) from the perspective of the household: (i) those who give wives to it and those who take wives from it, (ii) those who give wives to those in class (i) and (iii) those who take wives from class (i). These three classes have unequal relationships. However, honour and prestige go in the opposite direction to women in marriage. This means that wife-takers are superior to wife-givers and by the fact of giving a wife to a group, one receives honour and prestige within one's own group. The following diagram shows how the rule of hypergamy in North India acts as a form of exchange between, women and dowry on the one hand and prestige and honour on the other.

Here, A, B and C are patrilineages which are ranked by high to low status. The upward arrows indicate that lineage C has given the woman and dowry to the man of lineage B. As bride-giver, lineage C is lower to B and lineage B is lower to A. The rule of hypergamy accords lower status to bride-givers.

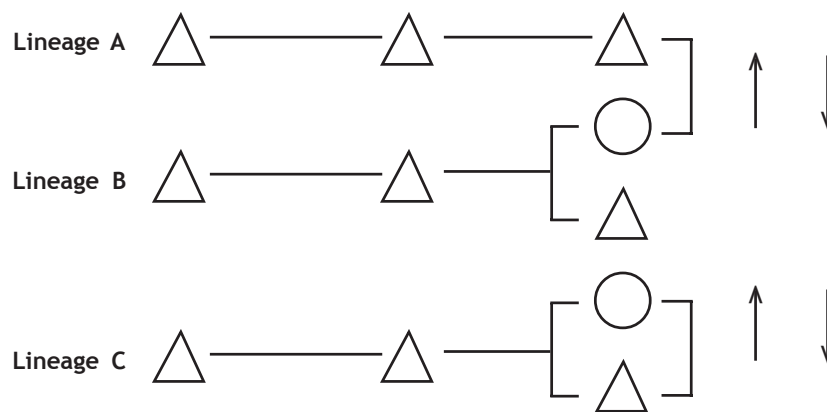


Fig. 12.6: Hypergamy in North India as an Exchange

At the same time by giving the women and dowry to high-status lineages, the lower status lineages gain prestige and power within their groups. Thus, the downward arrows indicate the movement of prestige and honour in the direction opposite to women and dowry. In other words, women and dowry are exchanged for prestige and honour among the hierarchically arranged lineages of a subcaste/caste in North India.

D) Ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin

Ceremonial exchange of gifts on the occasions of life cycle rituals provides us with the understanding of a patterned behaviour among various categories of kin. Generally, the bride-givers, in correspondence with their inferior status vis-a-vis bride-takers, initiate the process of gift-giving during marriage and continue to give greater amounts of gifts. In other words, you can say that gift-giving and receiving is a well-defined social activity. See Box 12.5 for two examples of ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

Box 12.5: Two Examples of Ceremonial Exchange of Gifts among Kin

L. Dumont (1966: 91) has pointed out that mother's brother (uterine kin) and wife's brother (affinal kin) have similar ceremonial functions. Not only this, as wife's brother becomes, after a few years, mother's brother to the children, there is little difference between the two.

A.C. Mayer (1960: 232) has described in his study of kinship in a village in Malwa that all gifts given by one's mother's brother are called *mamere*. In contrast to the gifts given by the mother's brother, there are gifts known as *ban*, given by one's agnates. *Ban* is the term used also for the gift, which is given by other relatives such as the groom's sister's husband to the groom's wife's brother. This shows that the groom's sister's husband (or father's sister's husband in the context of the ascending generation) is viewed to be a part of agnatic kin vis-a-vis the groom's wife's brother (or mother's brother for the ascending generation).

In sociological vocabulary you can put the same thing in this way. You look at the groom's sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) as a wife-taker. Similarly, we look at the groom's wife's brother (wb) or his mother's brother (mb) as a wife-giver. Now if the gift to A's wife-givers (i.e. mother's brother or wife's brother) by A's wife-taker (sister's husband or father's sister's husband) and by A's agnates are known by the same term '*ban*' then we can say that in opposition to A's wife-givers, his agnates and wife-takers have been merged into one category. This is so because for the groom's

wife's brother (or mother's brother) the groom is a wife-taker and groom's wife-taker is his sister's husband or father's sister's husband. These two sets of wife-takers are on one side and the wife-givers are on the other.

To this example of ceremonial gift-giving at a wedding, we can add one more in Box 12.6.

Box 12.6: Another Example of Ceremonial Gift-Giving

Dumont (1966: 93-5) has shown a similar distinction being made between wife-givers and wife-takers (the terms used by Dumont) in the context of gift-giving at the end of mourning in a village of Gorakhpur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Here, the main mourner is generally a son or an agnate of the deceased. The ceremony of tying a turban on the head of the main mourner is done by an affine who has taken a wife. In other words, preferably sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) ties the turban. Then again for the ceremony of *shaiyyadan* (gift of a bed), a sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) is asked to receive the gift. This ceremony emphasises their status as wife-takers. The priest clearly asks for those who have taken the daughters to come forward for receiving the *shaiyya* (bed). Thus, of the two kinds of affines (the wives-taker and wife-giver) the affines of the wife-taking type are preferred over the affines of wife-giving type. In the hypergamous situation, wife-takers are higher than the wife-givers and therefore in ceremonial gift-giving they remain as the recipient while the wife-givers remain at the giving end.

F.G. Bailey (1957) in Orissa and Oscar Lewis (1958) in Rampur have also recorded the flow of gifts from affinal kin (wife's relatives) and uterine kin (mother's relatives). According to A.C. Mayer (1960), the function of the gifts made by uterine and affinal kin is similar, i.e. to enhance the status of wife-takers. In sociological terms, we say that this type of exchange of gifts shows the hypergamous nature of marriage in North India. In other words, the woman is always given into the group which is higher in status, and the flow of gifts from the family maintains this distinction forever. This, in turn, explains the nature of kin relationships in North India.

12.3 Application of Alliance Theory to the Study of Kinship System in South India

South India comprises the geographical area covered by the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. People of the four states speak languages of the Dravidian family. Quite like North India, the South too has its share of diverse kinship systems. The state of Kerala is distinct for its matrilineal system of descent and the practice of inter-caste hypergamy. Also, despite common elements, each of the four states has its own socio-cultural patterns of kinship. Just as we did in the case of North Indian kinship, we will focus on common elements in terms of the four major aspects of kin relationships, namely i) kinship groups, ii) kinship terminology, iii) marriage rules and iv) ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

i) Kinship groups

You can categorise kin relatives in South India in two groups namely, the patrilineage and the affines.

Patrilineage: Quite like in North India, in South India too, the fact of relating to various categories of kin beyond one's immediate family means a close interaction with members of one's patrilineage. Owing to patrilocal residence, the lineage members get the chances for frequent interaction and cooperation. The ties of descent and residence constitute a kin group. You may observe that each of the two regions, South and North India, has such a group. For example, in her study of the Brahmins of Tanjore district, Gough (1955) describes patrilineal descent groups, which are distributed in small communities. Each caste within the village contains one to twelve exogamous patrilineal groups (For another example see Box 12.7).

Box 12.7: Example of Kin Groups among the Pramalai Kallar of Madurai

In his study of the Pramalai Kallar of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Dumont (1986) describes kin groups in terms of patrilineal, patrilocal and exogamous groups, called *kuttam*. All members of the *kuttam* may form the whole or a part of one or several villages. It may be subdivided into secondary *kuttam*. Each *kuttam* bears the name of its ancestor, which is also the name of the chief. The name is inherited by the eldest son who is also the holder of the position of chief in the group. The ritual activities, in which the *kuttam* members participate, show its significance as a unit of kinship organisation. During harvest season, when food is plenty, all the members of the group are invited and they collectively worship in the temple of the *kuttam*. In the economic sphere, as land is owned by the male members of the *kuttam*, we find that after the death of the father, there are frequent fights between brothers or coparceners, as opposed to the free and friendly relations among affinal relatives. Thus, it is said amongst the Kallar that brothers or coparceners do not joke. The coparceners are known as *pangali*. In the classificatory system of South Indian kinship terminology, they are opposed to the set of relatives, known as *mama-machchinan*.

Affinal Relatives: The kin group of affinal relatives (those related through marriage) is opposite to a patrilineage. Beyond the patrilineage are the relatives who belong to the group in which one's mother was born, as well as one's wife. A person's uterine or *mama* (from mother's side) and affinal or *machchinan* (from wife's side) kin comprise a common group of *mama-machchinan*. This group of relatives includes also the groups in which a person's sister and father's sister are married. Dumont (1986) has described the nature of interaction between a patrilineage and its affines to be always cordial and friendly.

Indirect Pangali: If group A is one's patrilineage and group B is one's *mama-machchinan* (uterine and affinal kin), then members of group C, which is *mama-machchinan* of group B, will become classificatory brothers to people in group A. The term for such classificatory brothers is *mureikku pangali* (see Dumont 1950: 3-26). These relatives, though called a kind of *pangali*, are never equal to actual coparceners or sharers of joint patrilineal property. Beyond this circle of relatives, the rest are only neutral people.

Let us now discuss the South Indian kinship terminology, which places particular emphasis on affinal relationships. Those who follow the alliance approach are particularly interested in affinal relationships.

ii) Kinship terminology

Kin relationships in Dravidian languages follow a clear-cut structure with precision. According to Louis Dumont (1986: 301), main features of this system are that a) it distinguishes between parallel and cross-cousins and b) it is classificatory. Let us discuss these two features.

a) **Parallel and cross-cousins:** Parallel cousins are those who are the children of the siblings of same sex. This means that children of two brothers, or of two sisters, are parallel cousins to each other. Cross-cousins are those who are the children of the siblings of the opposite sex. This means that children of a brother and a sister are cross-cousins.

The kin terminology in South India clearly separates the two categories of cousins for the reasons that parallel cousins cannot marry each other while cross-cousins can. If the system of terminology did not distinguish between the two categories, there would have been utter confusion in the minds of the people. But as any speaker of one of the four Dravidian languages will tell you, there is never any doubt as to who is one's parallel cousin, with whom you behave as a brother/sister and who is one's cross-cousin with whom one is to remain distant and formal. The parallel cousins are referred as brothers/sisters. For example, in Tamil, one addresses all parallel cousins *annan* (elder brother) or *tambi* (younger brother) and *akka* (elder sister) or *tangachi* (younger sister). Cross-cousins are never brothers/sisters. For example, in Tamil, one refers to cross-cousins as *mama magal/ magan* (mother's brother's daughter/ son) or *attai magal /magan* (father's sister's daughter/ son). The following diagram will further clarify this simple formulation.

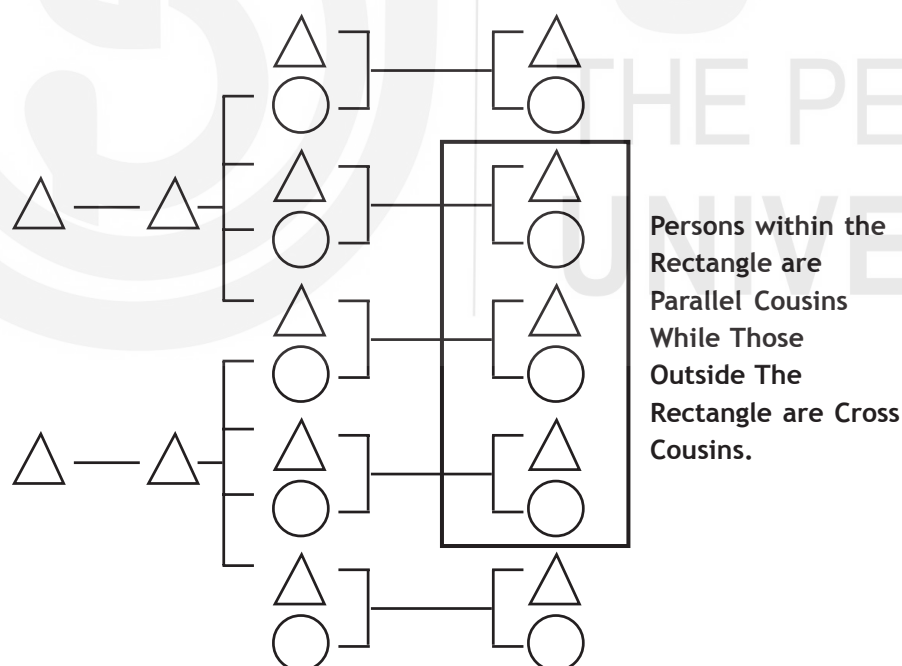


Fig. 12.7: Two Categories of Cousins

This system of kinship terms agrees with the practice of marriage among close relatives. It separates all descent lines into those with whom one can marry and those with whom one cannot marry. The terminology clearly tells that in a person's own generation, males are either one's brothers or brothers-in-law. Similarly females are either sisters or potential spouses. You can argue that in this very sense, Morgan (1981:394) described the Dravidian kinship terminology as 'consistent and symmetrical'.

For the sake of comparison, let us clarify that in North India, all cousins (be they parallel or cross) are considered consanguines or brothers/sisters. They are not allowed to marry each other. Then in this respect, you can see how North Indian kinship system is different from the one in South India and how the kinship terminology reflects this distinction.

b) **Classificatory nature of kinship terminology:** You can say that the Dravidian kinship terms are a mirror image of the kinship system in South India because classificatory nature of terminology matches perfectly with the distinction between parallel and cross-cousins. The terminology becomes classificatory in the following manner.

The person's own generation is terminologically divided into two categories.

- a) One group consists of all the brothers and sisters, including one's parallel cousins and the children of the father's parallel cousins.
- b) The other group comprises cross-cousins and affinal relatives such as wife/husband of the category 'a' (above) relatives. In Tamil, this category is called by the term of *mama-machchinan*.

You can also see how the two classes of kin divide relatives in one's own generation and in both ascending and descending generations.

One's own generation: This bi-partition applies to the whole generation of a person. In other words, all one's relatives in one's own generation are systematically classified in this way. There is no third category of relatives. People falling into either category are not considered to be relatives. The Tamil term for category (a) is *pangali*, which means 'those who share'. The word *pangali* has connotations of both the general and the specific kind. In its general sense, it refers to classificatory (*murei*) brothers, who do not share a joint property. They are all reckoned as *pangali* (brothers). In its specific sense, the word '*pangali*' refers to strictly those people who have a share in the joint family property. Here we are more concerned with the classificatory (*murei*) connotation of this term.

The two categories (*pangali* and *mama-machchinan*) are both opposed and exclusive to each other. This classification, which has been explained above in terms of relatives in one's own generation, applies to groups, lineages, villages and so on. This bi-partition applies to both the generation above one's own and the generation below one's own.

Affines of affines: The principle of classifying relationships into the categories of *pangali* and *mama-machchinan* extends to even those who are the affines of one's affines. As we have already seen, the rule is that one has to assign a class to each relative. If A is the affine of B who is an affine of C, then the relationship between A and C has to be, according to the above formulation, that of a *murei pangali* or classificatory brother. This is so because anyone who is related to you, and is not your *mama-machchinan* then has to be your *murei pangali* or classificatory brother.

Age and sex distinction: By separating the older and younger relatives, the ego's generation is divided into two parts. Similarly, the father's generation is also divided into two parts. In Tamil, brothers and sisters and parallel cousins older to ego are called *annan/akka*, respectively, and those younger to ego are called *tambi/tangaichi*, respectively. In the same way all brothers/

sisters and parallel cousins older to one's father are called *periyappa/periyamma* and younger one's are *chittappa/sinnappa/chithi/sinnamma*, respectively.

The sex distinction is paired, says Dumont (1986: 302), with the alliance distinction. As soon as a distinction is not necessary for establishing an alliance relationship it is merged. This is what we find in the case of kin terms applied in grand-parental and grand children's generation. For the generation of one's grandchild, one does not distinguish between one's son's and daughter's children. Both are referred in Tamil, as *peran* (grandson) or *peththi* (grand daughter). Similarly, maternal grandfather/mother and paternal grandfather/mother are designated by a common term *tata* for grandfather and *patti* for grandmother. Merging of the sex distinction in generations of grandparents and grandchildren shows the boundaries where the relationship of alliance ceases to matter and the two sides can be assimilated into one category.

The above description of kinship terminology in South India should not give you the impression that there are no variations in this general picture. In fact, particular features of kinship terms in specific regions are of great interest to sociologists. For example, Louis Dumont (1986: 301-9) has discussed in particular, features of kinship among the Pramalai Kallar of Tamilnadu. But here we are concerned with only the general and broad scheme of kinship terminology.

iii) Marriage Rules

Positive rules of marriage characterise the kinship system in South India. This means that preference for a particular type of alliance in marriage is clearly stated and practised. You may remember that in the context of North India negative rules of marriage tell us whom one should not marry. In South India the marriage rules are quite clear about who one should/ can marry.

Three types of preferential marriage rules:

The preferential marriage rules are of the following three types.

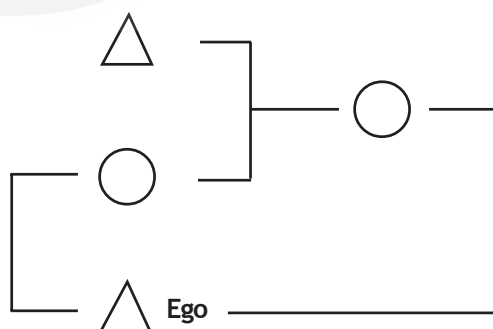


Fig. 12.8: Marriage with Elder Sister's Daughter

i) In several castes in South India, the marriage between a man and his elder sister's daughter gets the first preference. Among the matrilineal societies like the Nayars, this is not allowed. A simple diagram will show this positive rule of marriage in patrilineal South India in the following manner.

Here, ego is married to his sister's daughter.

ii) Next category of preferred marriage is the marriage of a man with his father's sister's daughter (fzd). In other words, we can also say that a woman marries her mother's brother's son (mbs). In this kind of marriage, the principle of return is quite evident. The family, which gives a daughter, expects to receive a daughter in return in marriage. In other words we can say that when ego marries her mbs, she is given in marriage to the family from which her mother had come. Thus, the principle of return is followed in this type of preference. Often, this process takes two generations to materialise. With the help of a kinship diagram we will see how this rule operates.

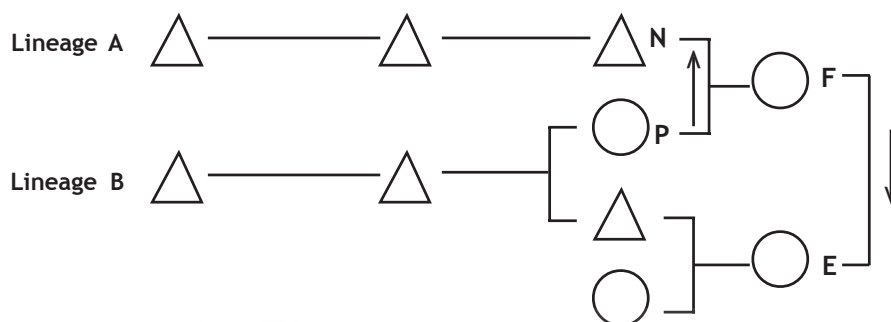


Fig. 12.9: The Rule of Return in Marriage

Lineage B gave the woman (P) in marriage to the man (N) of lineage A. In the next generation, lineage A gave the woman (F) to the man (E) of lineage B. Thus, a man's marriage with his patrilateral cross-cousin reflects the positive 'rule of return' in South India.

iii) The third type of preferential marriage is between a man and his mother's brother's daughter (mbd). In a way, this is the reverse of (ii) above. Some castes, such as the Kallar of Tamil Nadu, Havik Brahmin of Karnataka, some Reddy castes of Andhra Pradesh, allow only this type of cross-cousin marriage. In the castes, which have type (iii) of preference, there is always an underlying notion of superiority or hypergamy. This is not present in South India to the extent that is found among the bride-takers in North India. But in this type of marriage, the principle of no-return or a 'vine must not be returned' is practised and therefore the bride is given only in one direction. The bride-takers are considered to be somewhat higher to bride-givers. This unidirectional process is shown in the following diagram.

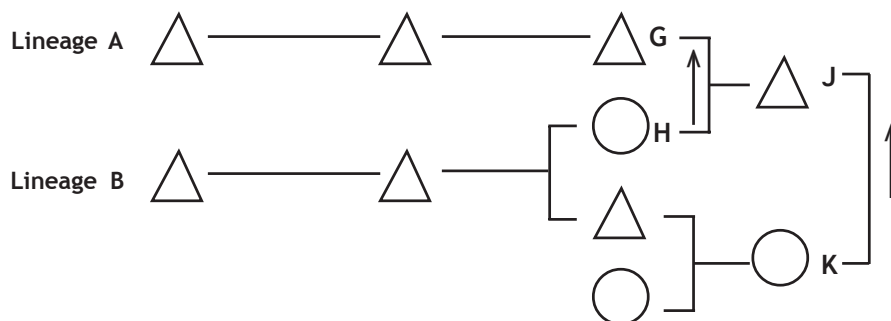


Fig. 12.10: The Rule of No Return or The Rule of Repetition

Lineage B gave the woman (H) to the man (G) of lineage A. In the next generation lineage B gave again a woman (K) to the man (J) of lineage A. Here a man's marriage to his matrilineal cross-cousin indicates the positive 'rule of repetition' among some castes in South India.

When one set of brother and sister marry another set of brother and sister, there is no distinction between patrilineal and matrilineal cousins in the cases of marriage of their children. In such a case the question of preference for (ii) or (iii) type does not arise, because the children of each set are cross-cousins to the other and they can and do marry. In the above three types of preferential marriage in South India we find a definite tendency towards marriages within a small kin group. This group is just outside one's immediate family. The family seeks to strengthen the already existing kin relationships through marriage. Thus, a woman may find that by marrying her mother's brother (mb) her mother's mother (mm) and mother-in-law are one and the same person. Or, if she marries her mother's brother's son then her mother's mother and her husband's father's mother are one and the same person. These examples go to show that marriages take place within the limited kin group. This also shows that village exogamy is not practised in South India. The agnates and affines can be found living in the same village. Affines in South India, living in the same village, are commonly involved in each other's social life. This kind of situation is rare in the context of kin groups in North India. But there are some other restrictions regarding marital alliances in South India. We shall now look at them. See Box 12.8 for restrictions regarding marital alliances.

Box 12.8: Restrictions regarding Marital Alliances

What are the restrictions imposed with regard to marriage between certain relatives? In certain castes a man can marry his elder sister's daughter but not his younger sister's daughter. Also a widow cannot marry her deceased husband's elder or younger brother or even his classificatory brother. Here we find that for each individual, the prohibited persons for marriage differ. Then there is, of course, the rule that a person cannot marry in one's own immediate family and one's lineage. The lineage in the case of the Kallar subcaste is known as *Kuttam* (Dumont 1986: 184). All individuals in the lineage are forbidden to marry persons of the lineage.

iv) Ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin

The process of gift-giving and taking reflects the principles governing the separation/ assimilation of various categories of kin relationships. This is the reason why we look at this aspect of kinship behaviour. You can distinguish between two categories of gifts and counter-gifts in South India from certain persons to other persons or from certain groups to other groups.

- a) Gifts passing from the bride's family to the groom's family or the reverse can be seen as a series of exchanges between affines. This is one category of gift-exchange.
- b) The other category of gift-giving and taking occurs within each of the two groups. We can call it internal exchange of gifts. It is sometimes possible for a person to make/receive gifts from both sides. Because of the positive rules of marriage between relatives, often certain individuals are placed in the positions of receivers and givers at the same time. In other words, there is a process of merging of relationships (complete Reflection and Action 12.5 to identify the examples of both categories of gifts).

Reflection and Action 12.5

Fill in the blank spaces and thereby identify both categories in examples from ethnographic studies made in South India.

Louis Dumont (1986: 256) in his study of the Pramalai Kallar subcaste of Tamil Nadu mentions a gift of money from the bridegroom's father to the It is known as '*parisam*'. The bride's father uses this money to get jewels for his daughter. But he is expected to spend twice the amount he receives. Thus, we may say that the bride's jewels are paid for half-in-half by the two families. This particular ceremony marks the of the giving and taking of gifts between It continues for a period of at least three years.

Then, the birth of the first child gives rise to another cycle of gift-exchange. In fact, among the Pramalai Kallar, when the newly weds set up an individual household after three years of marriage or after the birth of a child, the provide the household articles. This gift is called '*vere pona sir*', literally meaning 'the gift for going apart'. So from '*parisam*' to 'the gift for going apart', we witness the series in which a gift is made and it is returned after 'doubling' its content. The series begins with a gift from the groom's side and ends with a gift from the bride's side. Thus, though there is a of gifts between affines on both sides, it is quite clear that the ends up paying more. In other words, gifts from the groom's side are mere excuses for getting more gifts from the bride's side.

Having seen the nature of gifts passing from the bride's family to the groom's family, now we also discuss the gifts given and taken within each group of

At weddings, both in the bride's house and in the groom's house respectively, a collection (usually in the form of cash) is taken from the relatives present at the occasion. This is called the '*moy*' among the non-Brahmin castes in South India. The same is practised by the Brahmins under the name of 'writing the *moy*'. A person is given the charge of recording the amount of cash/kind given by a particular person. In this gift-giving also, there is the principle of One gives '*moy*' to those who have already given or will give on similar occasions. Louis Dumont (1986: 256) tells us that among the Pramalai Kallar, the mother's brother is the first person to contribute to the *moy*. After the mother's brother other relatives make their contribution. Usually the money thus collected goes towards the expenses incurred for the marriage feast.

In the cycle of gifts, the role of the mother's brother is quite prominent. After a child is born to a family, the mother's brother gives gifts on various occasions in the child's life. Among the Pramalai Kallar (see Dumont 1986: 256) the mother's brother gives to his sister's son at birth a gift of land or money. In a way, we can say that the gifts given by are a continuation of the series, which started at the mother's wedding. Then we called it an of gifts between Now, the mother's brother- an affine of ego's father, is merged in relation to the affines in ego's generation, among the common relatives of one group, either of the bride/or the groom. Secondly, the special place of the gifts made by the points to the obligation the female side has to the male side. This is seen in the continuity maintained by the relatives on the mother's side in terms of gift-giving even to the next

You may say that in the context of kinship behaviour at ceremonial exchanges of gifts in South India, the element of reciprocity is present, though the bride-givers have to pay more gifts than they receive. In comparative terms, you may also say that in North India, the gifts travel from the bride givers to bride-takers in a unidirectional manner. As a result, the bride-givers, in turn, receive the enhanced prestige and status in their own community. In South India, the positive rule of marriage means that gifts are exchanged among close relatives. There is always the difference in the amount of gifts both sides exchange but their flow has to remain both-sided. It cannot be as unidirectional as it is in North India (for a comprehensive comparison of North and South Indian kinship systems see Unit 9 in Block 2 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A Programme.)

12.4 Conclusion

In Unit 12 you have focused on four major aspects of kinship structures to discuss the application of descent and alliances approaches to understand kinship patterns found in North and South India. The four aspects refer to kinship groups, kinship terminology, marriage rules and ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

12.5 Further Reading

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Karve, I. 1994. "The Kinship Map of India". In Patricia Uberoi (ed.) *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

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Approaches to the Study of Kinship Systems

In simple words you can say that kinship system refers to a set of persons, whom we recognise as relatives by virtue of blood or marriage relationship. I hope you will be able to identify in one category the family relationships and in the other category the marriage relationships. These are two basic social relationships we are all familiar with from close quarters.

In Sociology, we use a technical term, consanguinity, to denote all blood relationships and affinity to denote all relationships through marriage. It should not be difficult for you to give examples of the two types of kin relationships. Let us quickly complete a Reflection and Action exercise to find out if you can really do so.

Reflection and Action 12.1

Identify and sort out the following examples of kin relationships into the two categories we have just referred to.

Examples

Mother and son, father-in-law and daughter-in law, mother and daughter, father-in-law and son-in-law, father and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, father and daughter, mother-in-law and son-in-law, sister and brother, two sisters-in-law, two sisters, two brothers, two brothers-in-law.

Place each of the above examples in one of the two categories of Consanguinity and Affinity.

As we go further in our discussion of kin relationships, you will discover that such seemingly simple categories are not actually all that simple. But for the time being, as the initial step to enter the discourse on kinship systems, this exercise is both sufficient and interesting.

It would not be wrong to say at this point that it is the social recognition of these relationships that is more important than the actual biological ties. You may already know that networks built around kin relationships play a significant role in both rural and urban social life in India.

Let us now look at the main approaches to the study of kinship in India, that is the ways in which sociologists have explained the systems of kin relationships found in society in India.

Sociologists have described, compared and analysed the kinship-related findings from various regions of India. We may classify their approaches to the study of kinship under two headings (i) the Indological approach and (ii) the anthropological/ sociological approach. Let us discuss each of the two approaches.

i) Indological approach

You would agree with me if I say that the social institutions of Indian society have their roots in literary and learned traditions of the country. Many sociologists have used textual sources to explain the ideological and jural

bases of our institutions. You can cite the example of K.M. Kapadia (1947), who has used classical texts to describe Hindu kinship system. Similarly, you can give another example of P.H. Prabhu (1954), who bases his description of Hindu social organisation on Sanskrit texts. I would add the examples of Irawati Karve (1940, 43-44 and 1958) and G.S. Ghurye (1946, 1955). Both of them have extensively worked on the Indian kinship system. Both have explained kinship pattern in different regions of India on the basis of textual sources. They have taken a socio-historical perspective to discuss the various kinship systems. In this sense, the Indological approach to the study of kinship has provided a framework to understand the elements of continuity and transformation in the system.

ii) Anthropological/sociological approach: descent and alliance

Anthropological and sociological studies have looked at kinship systems from the point of view of descent and alliance. Some of you may ask: what is meant by the terms, ‘**descent**’ and ‘**alliance**’? For a short answer to the question see Box 12.1 and for a detailed answer see Unit in Block 3 of ESO 11 of IGNOU’s B A programme.

Box 12.1: Meaning of the Terms ‘Descent’ and ‘Alliance’

Descent refers to “membership of a group, and to this only” (see Rivers 1924: 85-88) You can use the term ‘descent’ with reference to groups of individuals with shared interests or property. According to Needham (1971: 10), there are six possible ways of transmitting group membership from parents to children. They are i) patrilineal (from father to offspring), ii) matrilineal (from mother to offspring), iii) duolineal or bilineal (transmission of one set of attributes from father to offspring and transmission of another set of attributes from mother to offspring), iv) cognatic (transmission of attributes equally from father and mother to offspring), v) parallel (a rare form of transmission in which descent lines are sex-specific, that is men transmit to male offspring and women transmit to female offspring), vi) cross or alternating (another rare form of transmission, in which men transmit to female offspring and women transmit to male offspring).

In simple words, alliance refers to positive and negative rules governing the marriage bond. Kinship comprises both descent relationships and relationships arising out of marriage alliance. Levi-Strauss (1949) gave importance to the marriage bond and analysed elementary structures, which prescribe (positive rules) and proscribe (negative rules) marriage with certain category of relatives. Looking at marriage alliance in this manner has provided a rich set of anthropological/ sociological findings, which have helped us to understand kinship systems in a comprehensive manner.

Let us now discuss the descent and alliance approaches to the study of kinship

Descent approach

Kin relationships give concrete shape to establishing clear-cut corporate social units. You and I, in fact each one of us, belongs to a cooperating and closely bound group of people. As a member of the group, you can depend upon the help and support of such people. You would observe that such cooperating local groups are always larger than elementary families of spouses and their children. When these groups are recognised or defined on the basis of shared descent, we call them descent groups.

In India, we generally find the patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems and of the two, patrilineal system is more common. The description and analysis of kin relationships in a descent group have given us a fairly comprehensive sociological understanding of certain types of kinship systems in India (see Box 12.2).

Box 12.2: Examples of the Studies of Descent Groups

Gough (1956) studied Brahmin kinship in a Tamil village and discussed the unity of the lineage with corporate rights on land. She focused on roles and inter-personal relationships in the wider kinship.

Madan (1965) analysed the role of kinship as an organising principle in the Kashmiri Brahmin society. He brought out the strong patrilineal ideology, a characteristic of kinship system of the Kashmiri Pandits.

The study of descent groups helped our understanding of patrilineal kinship system in North India. Sociologists/ anthropologists like, A.C. Mayer, T.N. Madan, Oscar Lewis in their studies of kinship organisation in North India, followed the descent approach. They described in detail various levels of kin groups and their activities.

In sociological studies, sociologists have used in the past such terms as 'line', 'lineal', 'lineage' etc. with or without the prefix 'patri' or 'matri' in the following four different ways.

- a) To denote corporate descent groups, i.e. lineage proper.
- b) To denote the chosen line of inheritance, succession etc. in a given society.
- c) In the study of relationship terminologies, we use the expression "two line prescription" to refer to terminological structures, which are consistent with "bilateral cross-cousin marriage".
- d) Regardless of which lines (matriline or patriline or both) we choose for the above three purposes, lineal relatives refer to one's ascendants or descendants. Lineal relatives are those who belong to the same ancestral stock in a direct line of descent. Opposed to lineal relatives are collaterals; they belong to the same ancestral stock but not in a direct line of descent.

The first three usages are context specific, that is, they refer to particular situations. Here, we emphasise social relations and groups and sociologists study them in terms of interaction, norms and values of a particular society. For example, following the lineage or descent approaches, scholars like Radcliffe-Brown (1924), have discussed the relation between mother's brother and sister's son in patrilineal societies. They use the idea of 'complementary filiation', i.e. the relationship an ego has with the relatives on the mother's side in a patrilineal society. In a matrilineal society it refers to the relationship an ego has with the relatives on the father's side. In a patrilineal society a person's maternal group is the affinal group of that person's father. This is the group, from which the person's father has taken a wife. For this reason some sociologists like to consider the question of affinity in its own right, rather than as a complementary set of relationships. You may say that in the descent approach, the emphasis is on social organisation of descent groups. Consequently, there is very little focus on the 'affinity' aspect of relationships.

Let us now look at the approach, which focuses on relationships arising out of marriage alliance.

Alliance approach

Kin relationships entail also the patterns and rules of marriage. When you find a sociologist paying special attention to these aspects of kinship, you can say that he/she is following the alliance approach to understand the patterns of kinship. Many studies of kinship in India have focused on marriage as an alliance between two groups and on kinship terminology, as a reflection of the nature of alliance. Because of their concentration on relationships arising out of marriage, you can safely say that these studies follow the alliance approach.

The main exponent of this approach was Louis Dumont (1950, 1953, 1957 a and b, 1959, 1962 and 1966). He focused on the role played by marriage in the field of kinship in South India. Dumont focused on the opposition between consanguines and affines as reflected in the Dravidian kinship terminology, and made an important contribution to our understanding of kinship system in India in general and of South India in particular. Following the implications of Levi-Strauss's theory, Dumont (1971: 89-120) applied to South India a structural theory of kinship that brought out the repetition of intermarriage through the course of generations. This pattern highlighted the classification of kinspersons into two categories of parallel and cross relatives.

The alliance approach to the study of kinship has helped sociologists to discuss and explain the distinction between bride-givers and bride-takers. In addition, it has also included the discussion on the notion of hypergamy (i.e. the bride-takers are always superior to bride-givers), practice of dowry in relation to hypergamy and ideas of exchange in marriage.

Sociologists and anthropologists followed the descent approach to explain the kinship system in North India. This they did in the context of the four aspects of kin relationships. For the sake of consistency in our delineation of both the approaches, we will continue to use the same four aspects for discussing also the alliance approach in the context of kinship system in South India. You will find the four aspects briefly discussed below.

- i) **Kinship groups:** Kin relationships provide both a method of passing on status and property from one generation to the next and effective social groups for purposes of cooperation and conflict. You need to identify the form of descent or of tracing one's relationships. In other words, you find out the social groups within which relatives cooperate and conflict. These social groups constitute kinship groups.
- ii) **Kinship terminology:** The list of terms used by the people to refer to their kin relationships expresses the nature of kinship system. This is why by describing kinship terminology you are able to throw light on the kinship system. Most features of the kinship system of any society are usually reflected in the way kinship terms are used in that society. Generally a person would apply the same term to those relatives who belong to the same category of kin relationships. In this case, these relatives would also occupy similar kinship roles.

A comparison and analysis of the various kinship terms helps us to understand the kinship structure, its make-up and the behaviour associated with each term. You can say that kinship terms provide the context and the idiom for

our social relationships. In this sense, kinship terms do not just tell us about biological and social relationships. They help us to look at the whole way of social life. Only by studying the language, values and behaviour of the particular people can we fully appreciate the significance of their kinship terms. Often the same kinship term is used to denote different meanings in different contexts. This is the reason why the study of kinship terms is closely associated with the study of language and culture.

In describing a kinship terminology, it is usual to denote the speaker by the name of ego. The word 'ego' means I in Latin and refers to the first person singular pronoun. The speaker or ego can be either the male or the female. Secondly kinship terms can be divided into two types. One type covers the terms of address. This means that certain kinship terms are used when people address each other. Then there are those terms, which are used for referring to a particular relationship. These are known as terms of reference. Sometimes, the two types may be expressed by one term only. Thirdly, you would also like to learn how to write long kinship terms in short. For example, if you wish to write mother's brother's daughter, you may do so by writing 'mbd'. Take another example, father's sister's daughter's son can be stated as 'fzds'. Here, 'z' stands for sister and 's' for son. In the same way you can write in short ffbd for father's father's brother's daughter. This method of writing kinship terms is useful when one is describing various sets of kinship terms. At this point you need to complete 'Reflection and Action' exercise in order to practise writing kinship terms in shorthand.

Reflection and Action 12.3

Write in short form the following kinship terms. Father's father, Father's mother, Father's brother, Father's brother's wife, Father's brother's son, Father's brother's daughter, Mother's brother, Mother's brother's wife, Mother's brother's son, Mother's brother's daughter, Mother's sister, Mother's sister's husband, Mother's sister's son, Mother's sister's daughter. Check your short forms with those of other students in your Study Centre.

- iii) **Marriage rules:** Just as kinship groups describe the form of kinship system found in a society, so also rules for marriage, categories of people who may/may not marry each other, relationships between bride-takers and bride-givers provide the context within which kin relationships operate. Talking about these issues gives us an understanding of the content of kin relationships. It is therefore necessary to speak of marriage rules for understanding any kinship system.
- iv) **Exchange of gifts:** Sociologists like to describe social relationships between various categories of relatives. As there are always two terms to any relationship, kinship behaviour is described in terms of pairs. For example, the parent-child relationship would describe kinship behaviour between two generations. This sort of description is possible only when you make a study of the kinship system of a particular social group. In the context of our discussion in Unit 12, we would focus on the chain of gift giving and taking among the relatives for understanding the behavioural aspects of kinship system. This discussion gives us an idea of how kinship groups interact and how particular persons play their kinship roles.

You will find that by describing the above four dimensions of the kinship system in relation to North and South India, you will be able to obtain a

fairly general picture of the patterns of kinship in the two regions. Before proceeding to the next section, it is important to mention one more feature of your study of kinship systems. You need to learn about kinship diagrams, which are graphic representations of fairly complicated kinship structures.

Kinship diagrams: The depiction of kinship diagrams makes it not only much easier to grasp the nature of different types of kinship groups, marriage rules and their implications but also presents the possibilities of visually comparing them with other kinship systems. Sociologists and anthropologists invariably use them for explaining various kinship structures. For following those in your books and constructing your own kinship diagrams you need to simply remember the following rules.

- The symbol $\triangle$ refers to a male and the symbol $\bigcirc$ refers to a female. When these symbols are shown in black, i.e., $\blacktriangle$ and $\bullet$, it means that the particular male or female is dead.
- The symbol $[$ refers to sibling relationship. It expresses brother/brother, sister/sister or brother/sister relationships. The symbol $]$, on the other hand, expresses the husband-wife or the marriage relationship.
- A horizontal line connecting the symbols $[$ and $]$, denotes filiation or the relationship between the parent/s and child/children.

Thus, with the use of above symbols, kin relationships are expressed to denote genealogical connections and to depict the structure of kinship groups. Let us take an example and see what the following diagram shows.



Fig. 12.8: Basic Kinship Diagram

This diagram shows that A is married to B, and C and D are the children of A and B. This simple diagram can be extended endlessly with the help of the same symbols. In this example you can further show that both C and D have their spouses and children. We can show that C is married to E, and G, H and I are the children of C and E. Similarly, D is married to F, and J, K and L are the children of D and F. This diagram will also show that GHI are the cross-cousins of JKL and that A and B are grandparents of G, H, I, J, K and L. Similarly, you can also locate mother's brother of J, K and L and father's sister of G, H and I. This diagram is drawn in the following manner:

Thus, with the use of above symbols, kin relationships are expressed to denote genealogical connections and to depict the structure of kinship groups. Let us take an example and see what the following diagram shows.

The diagram shows that A is married to B, and C and D are the children of A and B. This simple diagram can be extended endlessly with the help of the same symbols. In this example you can further show that both C and D have their spouses and children. We can show that C is married to E, and G, H and I are the children of C and E. Similarly, D is married to F, and J, K and L are the children of D and F. This diagram will also show that GHI are cross-cousins of JKL and that A and B are grandparents of G, H, I, J, K and L. Similarly, you

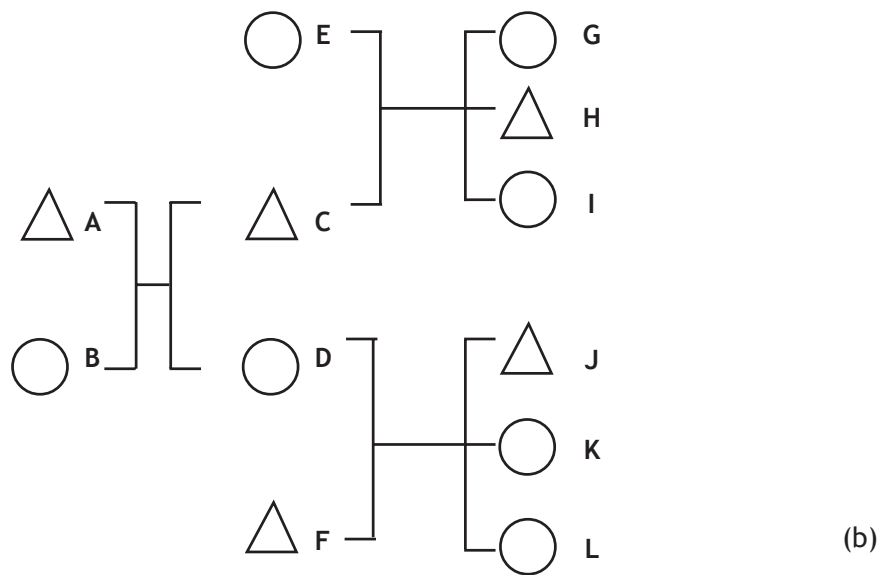


Fig. 12.2: Elaboration of Basic Kinship Diagram

can also locate mother's brother of J, K and L and father's sister of G, H and I. The elaborated diagram would look like the one given in Figure 12.2.

We shall be using some simple kinship diagrams to explain the implications of marriage rules in both North and South India. Having established our frame of reference, we can now begin to look at the application of the descent approach to the study of kinship system in North India.

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

Unit 13

Agrarian Classes and Categories

Contents

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Marx and Weber on Class
- 13.3 Notions of Agrarian Societies
- 13.4 The Classical Notion of Undifferentiated Peasant Society
- 13.5 Feudalism as a Type of Agrarian Society
- 13.6 Contemporary Agrarian Societies
- 13.7 Class Analysis of Agrarian Societies
- 13.8 Agrarian Social Structure and Change in India
- 13.9 Agrarian Changes during the British Colonial Rule
- 13.10 Agrarian Changes after Independence
- 13.11 Agrarian Class Structure in India
- 13.12 Conclusion
- 13.13 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- ≈ discuss the difference between views of Karl Marx and Max Weber on class;
- ≈ describe the notion of agrarian societies;
- ≈ explain the classical notion of undifferentiated peasant society;
- ≈ critically assess the idea of feudalism as a type of agrarian society;
- ≈ describe the contemporary agrarian societies;
- ≈ discuss the class analysis of agrarian societies;
- ≈ outline the agrarian social structure and change in India;
- ≈ explain the types of agrarian changes that took place during the British colonial rule in India;
- ≈ describe the agrarian changes after India became independent; and finally
- ≈ discuss the agrarian class structure in India.

13.1 Introduction

Agrarian societies are those settlements and groupings of people where livelihood is primarily earned by cultivating land and by carrying out related activities like animal husbandry. Agricultural production or cultivation is obviously an economic activity. However, like all other economic activities, agricultural production is carried out in a framework of social relationships. Those involved in cultivation of land also interact with each other in different social capacities. Not only do they interact with each other but they also have to regularly interact with various other categories of people who provide them different types of services required for cultivation of land. For example, in the old system of jajmani relations in the Indian countryside, those who owned and cultivated land had to depend for various services required at different stages of cultivation, on the members of different caste groups. In

exchange, the cultivators were obliged to pay a share of farm produce to the families that served them.

As is the case with other social interactions, all these exchanges are carried out in an institutional framework. The most important aspect of the institutional set-up of agrarian societies is the patterns of land ownership and the nature of relationships among those who own or possess land and those who cultivate them. Those who owned agricultural land do not always cultivate it themselves and often lease it out to tenants or share-croppers. Similarly, those who cultivate their own land or leased-in land from others often employ labour. The terms of employment of labour also vary. Some could employ labour on regular basis, some on casual basis and some others could do so on contractual basis. The form of employment of labour and the nature of relationship that labour has with employer farmers or land owners are important aspects of a given agrarian structure.

The agrarian structure and the land ownership patterns in a given society evolve historically over a long period of time. Those who own land invariably command a considerable degree of power and prestige in rural society. These sets of relationships among the owners of land and those who provide various forms of services to the landowning groups or work with them for a wage could be described as the agrarian class structure.

13.2 Marx and Weber on Class

A category of people are often described as a class if they share some common properties in a given production process. However, all those involved in the agrarian process in a given society need not constitute a class. Some of them could merely be a category of population with a set of socially defined attributes. The classical sociological thinkers, Karl Marx and Max Weber, wrote a great deal on the concept of class. Class was the most important conceptual category for Karl Marx in his analysis of human history and in his theory of social change.

Marx's model of class is a dichotomous one. It is through the concept of class that he explains the exploitation of subordinate categories by the dominant classes. According to Marx, in every class society, there are two fundamental classes. Property relations constitute the axis of this dichotomous system, a minority of 'non-producers', who control the means of production, are able to use this position of control to extract from the majority of 'producers' the surplus product. 'Classes', in the Marxian framework, are thus defined in terms of the relationships that a grouping of people have with the 'means of production'. Further, in Marx's model, economic domination is tied to political domination. Control of means of production yields political power.

Though Max Weber agreed with Marx on the point that classes were essentially defined in economic terms, his overall treatment of the concept is quite different from that of Marx. Unlike Marx, he argues that classes develop only in the market economies in which individuals compete for economic gains. He defines classes as groups of people who share similar position in a market economy and by virtue of this fact receive similar economic rewards. Thus, class status of a person, in Weber's terminology, is his "market situation" or, in other words, his purchasing power. The class status of a person also determines his "life chances". Their economic position or "class situation"

determines how many of the things considered desirable in their society they can buy. Thus, in Weberian framework, the concept of class could not be applied to pre-capitalist peasant societies where the market is only a peripheral phenomenon.

Reflection and Action 13.01

Observe the families in your colony. Think critically about the relationship that your family has with other families in your neighbourhood. In which class or category will you place all of them, in terms of agrarian, semi-rural or urban-based on their occupations? In terms of hierarchy, are all these families at par with yours? If not, make a chart of 10 families in your neighbourhood and place them hierarchically in comparison with your own.

Write a report of one page on “My Family Status” based on your earlier observations and understanding. Compare your report with those of other students at your study centre.

However, in the Marxist theory of history, the concept of class is applicable to all surplus producing societies. But, in his own writings, Marx focused mostly on the urban industrial or capitalist societies of the West. It was left to the later Marxists, particularly Lenin and Mao, to apply the concept of class to the analysis of agrarian societies.

Box 13.01: Marx's Outlook

“Marx's philosophical outlook was largely influenced by both Hegel and Hegel's materialistic successor Ludwig Feurbach. Thus Marx put forward a view of history known as economic determinism. He argued that the mode of production (e.g. hand labour or steam power) was fundamental in determining the kind of economy a society possessed, and the kind of cultural and social structure of that society. The economic base was the sub-structure and the political, religious and artistic features together with social arrangements constituted the super-structure, the latter being conditioned by the former.” (Mitchell G. Duncan, ed. 1968 : 121)

13.3 Notions of Agrarian Societies

In the modern industrial societies the nature of class structure is, in some ways, common everywhere. It is also easier to identify various class groups, such as the working class, the industrialists and the middle classes, in urban industrial societies. The social structures of agrarian societies are, however, marked by diversities of various kinds. The nature of agrarian class structure varies a great deal from region to region. The situation is made even more complex by the fact that in recent times, the agrarian structures in most societies have been experiencing fundamental transformations.

In most developed societies of the West, agriculture has become a rather marginal sector of the economy, employing only a very small proportion of their working populations. Though the significance of agriculture has considerably declined in countries of the Third world too, it continues to employ a large proportion of their populations. Thus, to develop a meaningful understanding of the agrarian social structure, we need to keep in mind the fact that there is no single model of agrarian class structure that can be applied to all societies.

Further, there are several different perspectives on the subject. There is a very influential group of scholars in the field of agrarian studies who are critical of analysing agrarian societies in class terms. **Peasant societies** for them are ‘a type’ of population, fundamentally different from the modern urban industrial societies. The classical anthropological writings on the subject conceptualized peasant societies in similar populist terms.

13.4 The Classical Notion of Undifferentiated Peasant Society

Anthropologists developed the classical notion of peasant society during the post-war period (after 1945). This notion was largely derived from the Western experience. Peasant societies were seen to have emerged after disintegration of the tribal form of social and economic life, when human beings began to earn their living by cultivating land. They also started living in small settlements. The typical peasant societies were seen to be pre-industrial in nature. As the economies developed with the onset of the industrial revolution, the traditional “peasant way of life” gradually began to change, giving way to the modern urban lifestyles.

Peasantry, in this anthropological perspective, was essentially an undifferentiated social formation. In terms of their social and economic organisation, peasants were all similar to each other. They cultivated their own plots of land with the labour of their families and produced primarily for the consumption of their own families. In other words, there were no significant class differences within the peasantry. While internally the peasantry was more or less homogenous, peasant societies were invariably dominated from outside by the urban elite. Unlike the “primitive” or “tribal” communities, peasant societies produced surplus, i.e. they produced more than what was enough for the subsistence requirements of their families and for the consumption of those who depended directly on them. This surplus was, however, transferred to the dominant ruling elite, who invariably lived in the city mostly in the form of land tax or land revenue (Wolf 1966).

In cultural and social terms, peasants were seen to be fundamentally different from the modern entrepreneurs. Their attitude towards work and their relationship to the land was very different from that of the profit-seeking entrepreneurs of the modern industrial societies. Robert Redfield, who pioneered anthropological research on peasantry, argued that “the peasantry was a universal ‘human type’”. They were attached to land through bonds of sentiments and emotions. Agriculture, for them, was ‘a livelihood and a way of life, not a business for profit’ (Redfield 1965).

Writing in a similar mode during the early twentieth century, a Russian economist, A.V. Chayanov had also argued that the governing logic of the **peasant economies** was different from the modern industrial economies. Unlike the industrial societies where economic process was governed by the principal of profit maximisation and laws of capital, the logic of peasant economy was subsistence oriented. The variation in farm size and productivity of land in the Russian countryside were not guided by the quest for profit or class difference but by the demographic factors. As the size of a household grew the requirements for food and availability of labour power with the household also grew. This directly resulted in an enlargement of the amount of land the household cultivated (working assumption being that the land was anyway available in abundance). However, as the size of the household

declined over time with newer members setting up their own independent households, the holding size also declined (see Harrison 1982 for a summary of Chayanov's theory).

Following this "classical discussion", Theodor Shanin (1987) developed an "ideal type" of the peasant society. He defined peasants as 'small agricultural producers, who, with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produced mostly for their own consumption, direct or indirect, and for the fulfilment of obligations to holders of political and economic power'. He further identified four interdependent facets of peasant societies:

- 1) Peasant family worked as the basic multi-dimensional unit of social organisation. The family farm operated as the major unit of peasant property, production, consumption, welfare, social reproduction, identity, prestige, sociability and welfare. The individual tended to submit to a formalized family role-behavior and patriarchal authority.
- 2) Land husbandry worked as the main means of livelihood. Peasant farming was characterized by traditionally defined social organization and a low level of technology.
- 3) Peasant societies followed specific cultural patterns linked to the way of life of a small rural community. Peasant culture often conformed to the traditional norms of behaviour and was characterised by face to face relations.
- 4) Peasantry was almost always dominated by outsiders. The peasants were invariably kept at arm's length from the sources of power. Shanin argued that their political subjugation was also interlinked with their cultural subordination and economic exploitation.

In this kind of a framework, though peasants were seen as being dominated by outsiders, they were not viewed as being different from each other, particularly in terms of their class status. In other words, in this classical notion of the peasant society, there were no internal class differences within the peasantry. The core unit of social organization was the peasant household.

However, this conception of peasant society emerged from the specific experience of the European societies. The historical literature on different regions of the world tends to show that the agrarian societies were not as homogenous as they are made out to be in such formulations. Agrarian societies were also internally differentiated in different strata. In India, for example, the rural society was divided between different caste groups and only some groups had the right to cultivate land while others were obliged to provide services to the cultivators. Similarly, parts of Europe had serfdom where the overlords dominated the peasantry. Such societies were also known as feudal societies.

13.5 Feudalism as a Type of Agrarian Society

Historically, the concept of feudalism has generally been used for social organisation that evolved in parts of Europe after the tribal groups settled down and became regular cultivators. With the success of industrial revolution during the 18th and 19th centuries, feudal societies disintegrated, giving way to the development of modern capitalist economies. However, over the years, the term feudalism has also come to acquire a generic meaning and is frequently used to describe the pre-modern agrarian societies in other parts of the world as well.

Compared to the concept of ‘peasant society’, the term feudalism conveys a very different notion of agrarian class structure. Cultivators in feudal societies were seen as a subordinate class. The land they cultivated did not legally belong to them. They only had the right to cultivate the land whose legal owner was usually the “overlord”/ “feudal lord” or the king. The distinctive feature of the agrarian class structure in feudalism was the structures of “dependency” and “patronage” that existed between the cultivators and the “overlords”. The cultivating peasants had to show a sense of “loyalty” and obligation towards their overlords. This sense of loyalty was expressed not only by paying a share of the produce of land to the landlord but very often the peasants were also obliged to work for the overlord and perform certain duties without expecting any wages in return. The system of *begar* (unpaid labour) popular in many parts of India until some time back would be an example of such a system.

13.6 Contemporary Agrarian Societies

The spread of industrialisation in the Western countries during the 19th century and in rest of the world during the 20th century has brought about significant changes in the agrarian sector of the economy as well. We can identify two important changes in agrarian economy that came with industrialisation and development. First, agriculture lost its earlier significance and became only a marginal sector of the economy. For example, in most countries of the West today, it employs only a small proportion of the total working population (ranging from two or three to ten percent) and its contribution to the total national income of these countries is not very high. In the countries of the Third World too, the significance of agriculture has been declining over the years. In India, for example, though a large proportion of the population is still employed in the agricultural sector, its contribution to the total national income has come down substantially. Though it continues to employ more than half of India’s working population, the contribution of agricultural sector to the national income is less than 25 per cent.

The second important change that has been experienced in the agrarian sector is in its internal social organisation. The social framework of agricultural production has experienced a sea-change in different parts of the world during the last century or so. The earlier modes of social organisation, such as “feudalism” and “peasant societies” (as discussed above) have disintegrated, giving way to more differentiated social structures. This has largely happened due to the influences of the processes of industrialisation and modernisation. The modern industry has provided a large variety of machines and equipments for carrying out farm operations, such as ploughing and threshing. These technological advances made it possible for the landowners to cultivate larger areas of land in lesser time. Scientific researches have also given them chemical fertilizers and high yielding varieties of seeds. The introduction of new farm technologies has not only increased the productivity of land but has also led to significant changes in the social framework of agricultural production.

Reflection and Action 13.02

Visit a village near your own village or a village near your town or city, in case you are living in an urban area. Interview at least two farmers of this village, one who is prosperous and better off, a large landowner, and the second, one who has a very small plot of land. Ask them about :

- i) How many members are there in their family? How many of them are directly related with the tilling of land?
- ii) What kind of dwellings do they live in and how big are they?
- iii) What are the tools and technology they use to produce their crops?
- iv) How educated are the members of their family? and
- v) What, if any, are their links with the towns and cities and how frequently do they make use of these links?

On the basis of this interview write an essay of two pages on “Agrarian classes in village.” Compare your essay with those of other students and discuss your essay with your Academic Counsellor.

The mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture made it possible for the cultivating farmers to produce much more than their consumption requirements. The surplus came to the market. They began to produce crops that were not meant for direct consumption of the local community. These “cash crops” were produced exclusively for sale in the market. The cultivators also needed cash for buying new inputs. In other words, the mechanisation of agriculture led to an integration of agriculture in the broader market economy of the nation and the world.

The mechanisation of agriculture and its integration in the broader market economy has also in turn transformed the social relations of production, leading to the development of capitalist relations in the agrarian sector. This capitalist development in agriculture has transformed the earlier relations of patronage and loyalty into those that are instrumental in nature. The growing influence of market and money meant that the relations among different categories of population become formalized, without any sense of loyalty or obligation.

However, not everyone benefits from the mechanisation process equally. The market mechanisms put various kinds of economic pressure on cultivating peasants. Some of them get trapped and become indebted eventually, selling off their lands and becoming landless labourers. Similarly, those who worked as tenants are generally evicted from the lands being cultivated by them and are employed as wage servants by the landowners. While some among the cultivating population become rich, others are left with small plots of land. In other words, this leads to differentiation of the peasantry into new types of groupings. The peasantry gets divided into different strata or classes.

The attitude of the peasants towards their occupation also undergoes a change. In the pre-capitalist or the traditional societies, the peasants produced mainly for their own consumption. The work on the fields was carried out with the labour of their family. Agriculture, for the peasantry, was both a source of livelihood as well as a way of life.

They begin to look at agriculture as an enterprise. They work on their farms with modern machines and produce cash crops that are sold in the market. Their primary concern becomes earning profits from cultivation. Thus the peasants are transformed into enterprising ‘farmers’. The agrarian societies also lose their earlier equilibrium. Farmers, unlike the homogenous peasantry are a differentiated lot. They are divided into different categories or classes.

13.7 Class Analysis of Agrarian Societies

As mentioned above, the concept of class was first used to describe the social groupings in the industrial societies of the West. Over the years scholars have used the concept to understand social structures in other settings as well. Using the Marxist method of class analysis, Lenin, during the early twentieth century, offered an analysis of the agrarian setting and class differentiation of the peasantry in Russia in his well known piece of writing the *Preliminary Draft Thesis on the Agrarian Question*. Similarly, in *How to differentiate the classes in Rural Areas*, Mao Tse Tung, the leader of the Chinese revolution applied the Marxist concept of class in his analysis of the Chinese peasantry. Over the years, the writings of Lenin and Mao have become the basis for understanding agrarian class structures in different societies.

Lenin and Mao suggested that with the development of capitalism in agriculture, the peasantry, that was hitherto an undifferentiated social category, gets differentiated or divided into various social classes. On the basis of their experience, they identified different categories of peasants in Russia and China respectively and the nature of relations the different categories had with each other. On the basis of their writings, we can broadly identify five or six agrarian classes. They would be the **landlords**, the owners of large tracts of land who do not work on land directly. They generally lease their lands out to tenants. They are a conservative class and do not like agricultural developments, which they fear, could weaken their hold over the rural society. **The rich peasants** are those who own substantial areas of land. They invariably lease out a part of their land to tenants but have direct interest in land. Once they begin to use modern technology, they begin to employ wage labour and become capitalist farmers. **The middle peasants** do not own much land but have enough for their own needs. They typically work with their family labour. Neither do they employ wage labour nor do they work as labourers with others. **The poor peasants** do not own much land. In order to survive they invariably have to supplement their income through wage labour. **The landless labourers** or agricultural proletariat are tenants, share-croppers who end up losing their lands when capitalism begins to develop in agriculture. They survive basically by hiring out their labour power to rich peasants.

These, according to Lenin, were *transitional* categories. With further development of capitalism in agriculture, there would be a tendency towards polarization of the agrarian population into two classes, the big capitalist farmers on one side and a large number of rural proletariat on the other.

However, the actual empirical experience of capitalist development in agriculture in different parts of the world does not seem to entirely conform to Lenin's prediction. Though agriculture has been gradually integrated into the market economy and peasantry has also got divided into various classes, there is very little evidence to support the argument that the agrarian population is getting polarized into two classes. In Western countries as well as in the countries of the Third World, the middle and small size cultivators have not only managed to survive, in some countries their numbers have actually gone up.

13.8 Agrarian Social Structure and Change in India

As mentioned above, agrarian class structure in a given society evolves over a long period of time. It is shaped historically by different socio-economic

and political factors. These historical factors vary from region to region. Thus though one can use the concept of class to make sense of agrarian structures in different contexts, one must also take the specific context into account while doing so.

As mentioned above, the traditional Indian “rural communities” and the agrarian social structures were organised within the framework of ‘jajmani system’. This was a peculiarly Indian phenomenon. The different caste groups in the traditional Indian village were divided between jajmans (the patrons) and kamins (the menials). The jajmans were those caste groups who owned and cultivated lands. The kamins provided different kinds of services to the jajmans. While the kamins were obliged to work for the jajmans, the latter were required to pay a share from the farm produce to their kamins. The relationship was based on a system of reciprocal exchange.

However, participation in this system of reciprocal exchange was not on an equal footing. Those who belonged to the upper castes and owned land were obviously more powerful than those who came from the menial caste groups. The structure of agrarian relations organised within the framework of jajmani system reinforced the inequalities of the caste system. The caste system in turn provided legitimacy to the unequal land relations.

Within this general framework, the actual structures of agrarian relations differed from region to region. While in some parts of the sub-continent, the influence of Brahmanical ritualism was strong, in some other regions the peasant values were stronger. This had a direct influence on the relative position of Brahmins and landowning castes in the given agrarian setting.

Over the years, the jajmani system has disintegrated and rural society has experienced profound changes in its social structure. The agrarian class structure has also changed. These changes have been produced by a large number of factors.

13.9 Agrarian Changes during the British Colonial Rule

The agrarian policies of the British colonial rulers are regarded as among the most important factors responsible for introducing changes in the agrarian structure of the sub-continent. In order to maximize their revenues from land, they introduced some basic changes in the property relations in the Indian countryside. These agrarian policies of the colonial rulers had far reaching consequences. In Bengal, Bihar, and in parts of Madras and the United Province, they conferred full ownership rights over the erstwhile zamindars who were only tax collecting intermediaries during the earlier regimes. The vast majority of peasants who had been actually cultivating land became tenants of the new landlords. Similarly, they demanded revenues in the form of a fixed amount of cash rather than as a share from what was produced on the land. Even when bad weather destroyed the crop, the peasants were forced to pay the land revenue.

These changes led to serious indebtedness among the peasantry. The poorer among them were forced to mortgage their land in order to meet the revenue demands. In the long run it led to peasants losing their lands to moneylenders and big landowners. The big landowners and moneylenders emerged as a dominant class in the countryside while the ordinary peasants suffered. In

the new agrarian class structure that emerged during the colonial rule, peasants had no motivation for working hard to improve their lands. As a result the agricultural production declined. The colonial rulers also enforced changes in the cropping pattern and made the local peasant produce cash crops like cotton rather than food grains as they needed cotton for textile mills in England. All this led to frequent famines and general misery of the peasantry. The big landowners gained at the cost of the small and poor peasants.

13.10 Agrarian Changes after Independence

The nationalist leadership during the struggle for freedom from colonial rule had mobilized peasantry on the promise of a better life. Leaders of the Indian National Congress had started talking about the urgent need of agrarian reforms even before they took over the reins of power from the colonial rulers in 1947.

The process of Land Reforms was initiated almost immediately after Independence. The central government directed the state governments to pass legislations that would abolish intermediary landlords, the zamindars, and would grant ownership rights to the actual tillers of the land. Some legislations were intended to grant security to the tenants. The states also fixed an upper ceiling on the holding size of land that a single household could possess. The surplus land was to be surrendered to the state and was to be redistributed among those who had no land.

Box 13.02: Factors of Social Change in Rural India

Dreze & Sen (1997 : p. 17) say that both 'Zamindari Abolition' and the development in agricultural practices in Western Uttar Pradesh were two episodes, not very dramatic in their impact in themselves (compared with for e.g. land reforms and productivity growth in other developing regions, including parts of India) they do define the broad parameters of change in the economic circumstances of the bulk of the population. The land reforms limited the powers of large feudal landlords, and gave ownership rights to a vast majority of tenant farmers who previously did not own land.

However, though the legislations were passed by all the states, only in some parts of the country the desired effects could be achieved. The evaluative studies of Land Reforms have often pointed out that only in those parts of the country where peasants were politically mobilized and the local state government had the right kind of 'political will', the land reforms could be effectively implemented. Similarly, some legislations, such as those on zamindari abolition were much more successful than those on the ceilings (see Joshi 1976).

The government of free India also initiated several other developmental programmes intended to encourage the cultivators to increase productivity of their lands. These included the Community Development Programme (CDP), the Co-operatives and the Green Revolution technology. These programmes were designed to introduce modern methods of cultivation in the Indian countryside. The cultivating farmers were provided with new technology, seeds and fertilizers at subsidized rates. The state agencies also provided them cheap credit. Though in principle these schemes were meant for everybody, studies carried out in different parts of India tend to reveal that

the benefits of the state support to agriculture were not equally shared by all the sections of rural society. Most of the benefits went to those who were already rich and powerful. However, despite this bias, these initiatives have been able to bring about a significant change in the agrarian economy at least in some parts of the country. This is particularly true about the regions like Punjab, Haryana, Western U.P., Coastal Andhra, and parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Box 13.03: 'Green Revolution' and Social Mobility

During the 1960's and 1970's the adoption of modern agriculture practices in Western Uttar Pradesh and their subsequent diffusion in parts of Haryana and Punjab regions came to be known as 'Green Revolution'. It led to a general prosperity of the region. Yogendra Singh (1988 : 5) points out that the "Green Revolution" signifies not merely growth in agricultural production but also the use of new technology and new social relationships in production processes. These developments make this phase of changes in rural economy and society distinctive. A new interaction between technology, social relationship and culture is now taking place in rural society. This has resulted in social mobility, emergence of new power structures and modes of exploitation of the deprived classes. It has generated new contradictions in society.

Apart from increasing productivity of land, these changes have transformed the social framework of Indian agriculture. Agriculture in most parts of India is now carried out on commercial lines. The old structure of jajmani relations has more or less completely disintegrated, giving way to more formalized arrangements among the land owning cultivators and those who work for them. Some scholars have argued that these changes indicate that capitalist form of production is developing in agriculture and a new class structure is emerging in the Indian countryside (see Thorner 1982; Patnaik 1990; Jodhka 2003).

13.11 Agrarian Class Structure in India

As mentioned above, traditional Indian society was organized around caste lines. The agrarian relations were governed by the norms of jajmani system. However, the jajmani relations began to disintegrate after the colonial rulers introduced changes in Indian agriculture. The process of modernisation and development initiated by the Indian State during the post-independence period further weakened the traditional social structure. While caste continues to be an important social institution in the contemporary Indian society, its significance as a system of organising economic life has considerably declined. Though agricultural land in most parts of India is still owned by the traditional cultivating caste groups, their relations with the landless menials are no more regulated by the norms of the caste system. The landless members of the lower caste now work with the cultivating farmers as agricultural labourers. We can say that, in a sense, caste has given way to class in the Indian countryside.

However, the agrarian social structure is still marked by diversities. As pointed out by D.N. Dhanagare, 'the relations among classes and social composition of groups that occupy specific class position in relation to land-control and land-use in India are so diverse and complex that it is difficult to incorporate them all in a general schema' (Dhanagare, 1983). However, despite the

diversities that mark the agrarian relations in different parts of country, some scholars have attempted to club them together into some general categories. Amongst the earliest attempts to categorize the Indian agrarian population into a framework of social classes was that of a well-known economist, Daniel Thorner (1956).

Thorner suggested that one could divide the agrarian population of India into different class categories by adopting three criteria. First, type of income earned from land (such as 'rent' or 'fruits of own cultivation' or 'wages'). Second, the nature of rights held in land (such as 'proprietary' or 'tenancy' or 'share-cropping rights' or 'no rights at all'). Third, the extent of field-work actually performed (such as 'absentees who do no work at all' or 'those who perform partial work' or 'total work done with the family labour' or 'work done for others to earn wages'). On the basis of these criteria he suggested the following model of agrarian class structure in India.

- 1) **Maliks**, whose income is derived primarily from property rights in the soil and whose common interest is to keep the level of rents up while keeping the wage-level down. They collect rent from tenants, sub-tenants and sharecroppers. They could be further divided into two categories, a) the big landlords, holding rights over large tracts extending over several villages; they are absentee owners/rentiers with absolutely no interest in land management or improvement; b) the rich landowners, proprietors with considerable holdings but usually in the same village and although performing no field work, supervising cultivation and taking personal interest in the management and improvement of land.
- 2) **Kisans** are working peasants, who own small plots of land and work mostly with their own labour and that of their family members. They own much lesser lands than the Maliks. They too can be divided into two sub-categories, a) small landowners, having holdings sufficient to support a family; b) substantial tenants who may not own any land but cultivate a large enough holding to help them sustain their families without having to work as wage labourers.
- 3) **Mazdoors**, who do not own land themselves and earn their livelihood primarily by working as wage labourers or sharecroppers with others.

Thorner's classification of agrarian population has not been very popular among the students of agrarian change in India. Development of capitalist relations in agrarian sector of the economy has also changed the older class structure. For example, in most regions of India, the Maliks have turned into enterprising farmers. Similarly, most of the tenants and sharecroppers among the landless mazdoors have begun to work as wage labourers. Also, the capitalist development in agriculture has not led to the kind of differentiation among the peasants as some Marxist analysts had predicted. On the contrary, the size of middle level cultivators has swelled.

The classification that has been more popular among the students of agrarian social structure and change in India is the division of the agrarian population into five or six classes. In terms of categories these have all been taken from Lenin-Mao schema, but in terms of actual operationalisation, they are invariably based on ownership of land, which invariably also determines their relations with other categories of population in the rural setting, as also outside the village.

At the top are the big landlords who still exist in some parts of the country.

They own very large holdings, in some cases even more than one hundred acres. However, unlike the old landlords, they do not always give away their lands to tenants and sharecroppers. Some of them organize their farms like modern industry, employing a manager and wage labourers and producing for the market. Over the years their proportion in the total population of cultivators has come down significantly. Their presence is now felt more in the backward regions of the country.

After big landlords come the big farmers. The size of their land holdings varies from 15 acres to 50 acres or in some regions even more. They generally supervise their farms personally and work with wage labour. Agricultural operations in their farms are carried out with the help of farm machines and they use modern farm inputs, such as chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds. They invariably belong to the local dominant castes and command a considerable degree of influence over the local power structure, both at the village level as well as at the state level. While the big landlords command more influence in the backward regions, the power of the big farmers is more visible in the agriculturally developed regions of the country.

The next category is that of the middle farmers who own relatively smaller holdings (between 5 acres to 10 or 15 acres). Socially, like the big farmers, they too mostly come from the local dominant caste groups. However, unlike the big farmers, they carry out most of the work on farms with their own labour and the labour of their families. They employ wage labour generally at the time of peak seasons, like harvesting and sowing of the crops. Over the years, this category of cultivators has also begun using modern inputs, such as, chemical fertilizers and hybrid seeds. Proportionately, they constitute the largest segment among the cultivators.

The small and marginal farmers are the fourth class of cultivators in India. Their holding size is small (less than five acres and in some cases even less than one acre). They carry out almost all the farm operations with their own labour and rarely employ others to work on their farms. In order to add to their meager earnings from cultivation, some of them work as farm labourers with other cultivator. Over the years, they have also come to use modern farm inputs and begun to produce cash crops that are grown for sale in the market. They are among the most indebted category of population in the Indian countryside. As the families grow and holdings get further divided, their numbers have been increasing in most part of India.

The last category of the agrarian population is that of the landless labourers. A large majority of them belong to the ex-untouchable or the dalit caste groups. Most of them own no cultivable land of their own. Their proportion in the total agricultural population varies from state to state. While in the states like Punjab and Haryana they constitute 20 to 30 percent of the rural workforce, in some states, like Andhra Pradesh, their number is as high as fifty per cent. They are among the poorest of the poor in rural India. They not only live in miserable conditions with insecure sources of income, many of them also have to borrow money from big cultivators and in return they have to mortgage their labour power to them. Though the older type of bondage is no more a popular practice, the dependence of landless labourers on the big farmers often makes them surrender their freedom, not only of choosing employers, but invariably also of choosing their political representatives.

This is only a broad framework. As suggested above, the actual relations differ from region to region. The agrarian history of different regions of India has been quite diverse and the trajectories of development during the post-independence period have also been varied.

13.12 Conclusion

Agrarian classes and categories are societies which depend largely on agriculture as their main source of sustenance. As you read in the above unit agrarian settlements and groupings of people depend for their livelihood on cultivating land and by carrying out related activities such as animal husbandry. Like all other economic activities, agricultural production is obviously an economic activity and as such is carried out in a framework of social relationships. Those involved in cultivation of land also interact with each other in different social capacities. Not only do they interact with each other but also with other categories of people who provide them with different types of services required for cultivation of land.

The social, economic and cultural interaction of different classes and categories of people takes place in an institutionalised framework. The most important aspect of the institutional set-up of agrarian societies is the pattern of landownership and the nature of relationships among those who own or possess land and those who till the land or do the actual cultivation. The form of employment of labour and the nature of relationship that labour has with their employer farmers or land owners are important aspects of a given agrarian structure. You learnt in the above unit that those who own land invariably command a considerable degree of power and prestige in rural society. These sets of relationships among the owners of land and those who provide various forms of services in the landowning groups or work with them for a wage could be described as the agrarian class structure.

What is a class? The views of leading scholars and thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber vary on this issue. Class for Marx is a dichotomous one. He says that in every class society, there are two fundamental classes. Property relations constitute the main criteria on the basis of this dichotomous system. For Max Weber, class depends on the 'market situation' or the purchasing power of a person. The class status of a person also determines his/her life chances. Thus, in Weberian framework, the concept of class could not be applied to pre-capitalist peasant societies where market is only a peripheral phenomenon. In comparison, the concept of class is applicable to all surplus producing societies.

The social structures of agrarian societies are, however, marked with diversities of various kinds. The nature of agrarian class structure varies from region to region. In recent times, the agrarian structures in most societies are undergoing fundamental transformations. In most developed societies of the West, agriculture has become a marginal sector of the economy, employing only a very small proportion of their working populations. In the Third World too, the ratio of population dependent on agriculture has begun to decline but it still employs considerable sections of the population.

There is an influential group of scholars in the field of agrarian studies who are critical of analysing agrarian societies in class terms. Peasant societies for them are 'a type' of population fundamentally different from the modern urban industrial societies.

Then you learnt about the classical notion of undifferentiated peasant society. This notion developed during the post-war period (after 1945). It was largely derived from the Western experience. A typical peasant society was seen to be pre-industrial in nature. As the economics developed with the onset of the industrial revolution, the traditional “peasant way of life” gradually began to change, giving way to modern urban lifestyles.

Theodor Shanin (1987) developed an ‘ideal type’ of the peasant society. He defined peasants as “small agricultural producers, who with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produced mostly for their own consumption, direct or indirect, and for the fulfilment of obligations to holders of political and economic power.” The historical literature on different regions of the world tends to show that the agrarian societies were not as homogenous as they are made out to be in such formulations. Agrarian societies were also internally differentiated in different strata. In India, for example, the rural society was divided between different caste groups and only some groups had the right to cultivate land while others were obliged to provide services to the cultivators. Similarly, parts of Europe had serfdom where the overlords dominated the peasantry. Such societies were also known as feudal societies.

With the success of industrial revolution during the 18th and the 19th centuries, feudal societies disintegrated, giving way to the development of modern capitalist economics. However, over the years, the term feudalism has also come to acquire a generic meaning and is frequently used to describe the pre-modern agrarian societies in other parts of the world, besides Europe.

This Unit also discussed the kinds of fundamental transformations that have taken place in contemporary agrarian societies. Increased mechanisation of agriculture, advanced technology and communications have all led to a shift in the pattern of social network of interaction. Increased yield, due to the intervention of science and technology, improved seeds, etc. led to a situation where surplus food is generated. The idea of ‘cash crops’ is introduced which further increased the distance between the rich and the poor. Therefore, social inequity increases, feudal values are lost or decline but instead market relations take over in the rural agricultural sector.

The attitude of the peasants towards their occupation also undergoes a change, as you read earlier. In the pre-capitalist or traditional societies, the peasants produced mainly for their own consumption. The work in the fields was carried out with the labour of their family. Agriculture, for the peasantry was both a source of livelihood as well as a way of life. But in modern times, landowners begin to look at agriculture as an enterprise. They work on their farms with modern machines and produce ‘cash crops’ which fetch higher prices in the market and therefore generate more money. Thus, profit motive becomes part of agricultural enterprise.

Lenin and Mao, two well known leaders from Russia and China, suggested that with the development of capitalism in agriculture, the peasantry that was hitherto an undifferentiated social category, gets differentiated or divided into various social classes. On the basis of their experience, they identified different categories of peasants respectively in Russia and China and the nature of relations the different categories had with each other.

However, that actual experience of capitalist development in agriculture in different parts of the world does not seem to entirely conform to Lenin's prediction. There is very little evidence to support the argument that the agrarian population is getting polarised into two classes. In the West, as in the Third World countries, the middle and small size cultivators have not only managed to survive but in some countries like India, their numbers have increased.

Traditionally agrarian societies in India were marked by a pattern of relationship called the "Jajmani system" where the different classes were interdependent on each other in terms of service. The land owners were the patrons or jajmans and the service providing castes were the 'Kamins' such as, the caste of carpenters, ironsmiths, etc. But gradually, after Independence, this system has declined. The two significant reasons which led to this decline were the abolition of Zamindari system and the Green Revolution.

The process of modernisation and development initiated by the Indian state during the post-Independence period weakened the traditional social structure. While caste continues to be an important social institution in the contemporary Indian society, its significance as a system of organising economic life has nearly disappeared. The agrarian class/caste structure is still the same; but it is not defined by caste any more as it traditionally used to be. The landless members of lower castes now work with the cultivating farmers as agricultural labourers. We can, therefore, say that in this sense, caste has given way to class in the Indian countryside.

Finally, in this unit you have learnt about the classification of agrarian population of India into different class categories. One of the well known sociologists who has done this is Daniel Thorner (1956). He divided agrarian class structure into three types, maliks, kisan and mazdoors, based on their relationship with the land.

13.13 Further Reading

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Unit 14

The Working Class

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- 14.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- ≈ define what is meant by the term ‘working class’;
- ≈ provide a brief history of working class generally;
- ≈ describe the working class in the Indian scenario;
- ≈ discuss the growth of working class in India; and
- ≈ explain the social background of the Indian working class.

14.1 Introduction

Some level of inequality has existed in all societies since time immemorial. All societies have been stratified, in the sense that all valued resources such as wealth, income and power have been unequally distributed. But inequalities were neither similar in all societies nor in all epochs. In medieval Europe societies were divided into order or estates resulting in groups of people known as aristocracy, peasantry, burghers and church. Each group had prescribed roles and associated legal rights and duties. At other places slavery was widely practised wherein slaves virtually had no social rights. In our own country, as you have learnt earlier, society was traditionally stratified into castes. The castes groups enjoyed different degrees of religious purity and pollution. The remnants of stratification based on caste are still visible, though in a modified form.

The Industrial Revolution took place in the middle of the 18th century in England. This led to wide ranging changes in society. It introduced new concepts such as industry, secularisation and community. New forms of stratification based on ‘class’ became prominent during this period. Though the term ‘class’ itself was not new, it acquired new meaning with other emerging concepts. This system of inequality was clearly different from older and known forms of stratification. First, classes were open whereas estates or castes were closed systems. There was no legal or religious barrier, which prevented the mobility of the individual in class hierarchy. In other words, class position could be achieved rather than being ascribed. Second, members of all classes have the same legal rights and duties. In effect all were judged by same laws and courts. Finally, unlike older forms of inequality, economic success was the sole criteria for determining class position.

In older systems of inequality individuals were grouped together in categories, which were polar opposites. Hence there were lords and serfs, master and slave and in our own society we had pure and impure castes. Similarly, in class-based stratification also there were bourgeoisie and proletariat (Marxian terms). A careful analysis reveals that membership in all such groups were essentially determined by economic relations. In Marxian terminology, relations of production determined the class position i.e. those who own the 'means of production' and those who sell their labour for wages. This brings us to the focus of this unit i.e. to discuss 'those who sell their labour' in class-based societies. Such people have been labelled as 'Working Class'. However, Marx himself never used this term to denote them.

14.2 Defining Working Class

The question 'who and what is working class' is not an easy one to answer. There are several reasons for this. The working class is not a cohesive entity and it has numerous differences and contradictions. There is a problem of where to draw the line. Who belongs to the working class and who does not? The difference further extends in terms of skill, sex, age, income and caste. Hence the working class is a complex, contradictory and constantly changing entity. But it is an entity – in other words, there is a group of people denoted as 'working class', who are not just a sum of people. Even though there are differences and contradictions within the working class, they need to be recognised and analysed. So then, can we have a single definition of working class? The answer is that one cannot have a single definition which will be all inclusive. This is because of the blurring of boundaries between classes and the different working class. For example, a worker in 1970 is not the same as a worker in 2005. That is, the composition, the size and the character of a class changes over a period of time. Therefore the requirement is of a series of definitions, which have to change in accordance with the changes in social structure.

Reflection and Action 14.01

Observe the labourers working in various capacities - road construction; house construction; digging wells; cleaning drains, etc. Take note of workers in factories, offices, dhabas and shops who are at the lower rung of the socio-economic scale.

Recall your experience of workers in other sectors of the economy, as well, and give a definition of the 'working class' which you think is suitable to define the wide range of diverse types of workers. Compare your definition with those of other students at your Study Centre.

In the Marxian scheme, the capitalist society is characterised by two principal classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat. Bourgeoisie owns the means of production and proletariat sell their labour for wages in order to live. The Marxist meanings of these terms have been specified clearly by Engels in a footnote to the 'Communist Manifesto'. By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, and by proletariat the class of modern wage-labourers. Hence, bourgeoisie is synonymous with the capitalist and proletariat with the working class.

In recent years, the Marxist view on the working class has been countered essentially by two views giving contradictory analysis. The first view is that

working class is literally disappearing. With the automation of industry and apparent displacement of blue-collar jobs, the working class is fast shrinking in size. However, the fact is that it is not the working class as a whole that is disappearing, but blue-collar workers are disappearing. The second view states the opposite. In this view all society is becoming working class. That is, students, teachers, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers and salaried employees of various kind are all workers. The working class is not disappearing by elimination, but is in fact expanding with everybody joining it except a few capitalists at the top. This view emphasizes the so-called blurring of class boundaries but overlooks the important social distinctions between classes. Moreover those distinctions are still very much prevalent in society.

However, the question still remains – who are the working class? As M. Holmstorm (1991) puts it ‘people commonly refer to industrial workers, and sometimes other kind of wage-earners and self-employed workers, as the ‘working class’. Usually this means a group who share similar economic situation, which distinguishes them from others, like property owners, employers and managers. It suggests a common interest and shared consciousness of these interests’. This implies that like other classes the defining feature of working class is their understanding of ‘a common interest’ and ‘shared consciousness’. However, in recent times these two concepts have become difficult to actualise for the working class due to their own internal divisions and diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

It is worthwhile to ask that given multiple divisions and subdivisions among the working class, such as organised formal or unorganised informal industrial workers, casual general labourers, the self employed and small peasants, does any type of ‘common interest’ exist? Or are various types of workers different classes with different and conflicting interest? Or do these classes think or act as if they were classes with distinct interests either in their everyday life, at work or at home?

It is difficult to find answers to these questions. The reason is that ‘consciousness’ per se becomes a tricky word, when used for working class consciousness. One of the problems in dealing with the working class is that one is dealing with people who do not have vocal or written expressions of their ideas or beliefs. Even in labour movements or in trade union movements, it is the non-worker labour leaders who make speeches not the worker. The other element is that the working class is a totality that goes far beyond the ordinary intellectual view of consciousness. It is an objective category. The usual way of viewing consciousness is in terms of formal statement of belief. However, in terms of working class and its living reality, this simply does not work. The problem is compounded by the fact that studies of consciousness tend to assume that consciousness is overwhelmingly a matter of mind, of verbalizations. A worker, however, does not have a public platform or press. Hence, verbal responses to formal questions, given the limited range of alternatives allowed to workers in such situations, inevitably give a picture of working class consciousness that is much more conservative than the underlying reality.

14.3 A Brief History of The Working Class

The history of the working class can be divided in several eras for simplicity of presentation. Though one tends to see the working class as an offshoot of capitalism, the early roots could be found in pre-capitalism also.

- a) **Pre-Capitalism:** There has been a very small working class since the time of the Roman, Greek and Chinese empires. That is, there have been people who were wage labourers rather than artisans from these times. Industries such as iron and coal mining for instance were modelled on capitalistic styles of production long before capitalism itself. As these types of workers were few and far between, they could not be seen as a class.
- b) **Early Capitalism:** The growth of capitalism witnessed a huge mushrooming of cities and necessitated the creation of a huge working class. Exorbitant cost of machinery and power meant that small-scale production was neither competitive nor possible. Peasants were driven from the land to cities through enclosure acts etc. So, for the first time, there were huge numbers of people who shared a common life experience of living and working close to each other.
- c) **Capitalism:** In capitalism this new group of people started to define themselves. The process which allowed such emergence of the new class consciousness was the concentration of people who worked together into same geographical areas in situations of grinding poverty. It was clear to the workers that their neighbours and work partners were starving and owners of the means of production were taking the entire surplus. In this regard it is important to mention that capitalism maintained itself through brute force best exemplified by the crushing of the 'Paris commune' and attacks on the 'Chartists' in Britain.
- d) **During world war:** Despite a widespread denunciation of the forthcoming war as late as 1912 by the left parties worldwide and pledges by the millions of workers not to fight, in the end, all left parties rallied behind their ruling class. Those that opposed the war outright were a small section of the working class, most notably Bolsheviks in Russia and the bulk of anarchist movement. The mass socialist parties which had developed out of struggles around Europe meekly led their members off to the slaughter. The war saw huge mutinies and revolution in Russia and indeed was to end with a workers' rising in Germany. This was the first time that throughout Europe socialist parties chose to work with the ruling class.

Box 14.01: Stalinism

Under Stalinism, the new method of social control had developed in USSR. This method relied on placing power in the hands of the 'state' instead of individual bosses. This had important effects on the working class. First, the working class was assured that they were living under socialism. Secondly, the fact that the factor that determined standard of living was access to resources rather than wealth per se tended to lead to individual solutions rather than collective ones. Moreover, wherever collective actions occurred, it was ruthlessly stamped on preventing the development of a tradition of successful collective action. The initial euphoria of the working class soon turned to despair as the Communist Party along with the state bureaucracy made itself the representative of the working class.

- e) **Post war to 70's:** In this period there was a boom of industrialisation and bosses all around the world. The standard of living of the working class rose drastically. Since the late 60's onwards the idea that class struggle politics was over became popular. A cure for the periodic recession that capitalism had gone through, had been found and the picture for everyone was rosy. It was also a period where the working

class was fragmented by the introduction of cheap mass transport, cheap housing and the reduction of societies to a body composed of individual families. Now the workers no longer lived near their work partners, but lived in huge housing colonies with few social resources.

Box 14.02: Role of Mass Media

A new method of social control was also found during the 70's which was owned by the capitalists. This method was the use of mass media such as television. This further helped in the fragmentation of the working class due to continuous hammering of capitalist ideologies and goodies. However, on the flip side, television also helped in fostering the development of newer forms of class struggle. In other words, the imperfection of capitalism was beamed into the living rooms of everyone. This helped in developing a new sense of consciousness among the working class, which was not only trans-regional in nature but also trans-national. Hence, the atrocities of capitalism in one part of the world sparked protests in another corner of the world.

- f) **The 80's:** The 70's ended in industrial discontent the world over, as the rate of increase in the standard of living slowed and began to move in the reverse direction. The post war boom ended and capitalism suddenly found itself unable to afford the concessions it had offered to the working class in return of peace. The increasingly multi-national character of capitalism started to have profound effects on the structure of the working class all over the world. The large scale, unskilled and semi-skilled heavy engineering, mining and assembly plants began to close in the first world or shifted to the cheaper third world countries. The rate of profit in manufacturing began to decline to the extent that money made through speculation was far greater than investment in the manufacturing unit. In the name of reducing overhead costs, the large-scale workforce was shacked. This was the best example of decimation of large-scale workplaces and communities which consequently led to further fragmentation of the working class. This era also witnessed creation of many more 'white collar' jobs which gave rise to the new middle class. The need to service the new growing middle class composed of speculators and dealers led to huge growth in the service sector. There was also greater reduction of permanent employment, hence a new sector of employment came up called the voluntary sector. Most of the jobs lost were full time and unionised, most of those created were part-time and anti-union. One final significant change was the huge increase in the numbers of women workers, in part due to the fact that many new jobs were part-time and generally badly paid.
- g) **The Working Class Today:** The nature of working class today is quite different from that a hundred years ago. In the late 80's a large section of left parties viewed this as meaning that socialism was no longer possible. Hence the best possible option is to form a rainbow alliance, which would attempt to limit the excesses of capitalism.

14.4 Working Class: The Indian Scenario

India has a multi-structural economy where a number of pre-capitalist relations of production co-exist with capitalist relations of production. Correspondingly, here a differentiated working class structure exists i.e. the numerous types of relations of production, consumption and accumulation of surplus combine to produce a variety of forms of the existence of the working class. This is

further compounded by the structural features of Pan-Indian society along with local conditions. So the composition of the working class is affected by the caste, tribe, ethnic origin and the gender based division of labour between male and female and associated patriarchy. This implies that despite internal structural differences and the relations of productions through which working people have been and continues to be, there exists a group of people denoted as 'working class'. Then, it becomes pertinent to analyse the growth of working class in India. This is particularly so, when one considers two facts. First, in India prior to 19th century there were vast numbers of working people not working class. Second, the growth of capitalist mode of production along with industrialization was imposed by the colonial masters.

14.5 Growth of Working Class in India

The modern working class came into being with the rise of capitalist mode of production. This mode of production brought with it the factory type of industry. In other words, rise of factory system of production and working class happened simultaneously. Conversely, without a factory industry there can be no working class but only working people.

Traditional Indian economy and encounter with colonialists

In India, as mentioned above, till the middle of the 19th century, there were working people but not the working class. In other words, Indian economy was characterized by what Marx termed as '....small and extremely ancient Indian communities... are based on the possession in common land, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts, and on the unadulterated division of labour, which serves, wherever a new community is started...'. The colonial rule and exploitation of British Imperialists completely ruined the system of production of these traditional and self-sufficient societies. Though the process started with victory in the battle of Plassey in 1757, the process was fastened with forced introduction of British capital, wherein the old economic system and division of labour was completely shattered. The surplus generated through the old system fell into the hands of the colonialists who then started direct plundering and exporting of the wealth of India to England. Simultaneously, the English capitalists felt the need of marketing in India the industrial products of England. Hence from 1813 onwards the door of free trade with India was opened not only for East India Company but for other British companies also. This was coupled with the imposition of heavy import duty ranging from 70 to 80 per cent on the cost of imported Indian textile and silk products in England. The combined result of these was that Indian economy suffered doubly – that is, not only was the textile industry ruined, but also the artisans were forced to starve. The same scenario existed in Indian metallurgical and other industries. Moreover, Indian raw material was an indispensable item for the development of British manufacturing industry. Hence, colonialists followed the trading policy whereby they not only flooded the Indian market with British industrial products but maintained the constant supply of Indian raw materials and agricultural products to England. In a word, as Sukomal Sen (1997) puts, India was transformed into an agrarian and raw material adjunct of capitalist Britain, simultaneously preserving feudal methods of exploitation. The result of this process was that 'Indian craftsmen were forced out from their age-long profession. The ancient integrating element of the unity of industrial and agricultural production unique in the traditional economy was shattered and the structure of Indian society disintegrated' (Sukomal Sen 1997).

i) The formative period

The forced intrusion of British capital in India devastated the old economy but did not transplant it by forces of modern capital economy. So, traditional cottage industry and weavers famed for their skill through the centuries were robbed of their means of livelihood and were uprooted throughout India. This loss of the old world with no new gains led to extreme impoverishment of the people. The millions of ruined artisans and craftsmen, spinners, weavers, potters, smelters and smiths from the town and the village alike, had no alternative but to crowd into agriculture, leading to deadly pressure on the land. Subsequently, with the introduction of railways and sporadic growth of some industries, a section of these very people at the lowest rung of Indian society who had been plodding through immense sufferings and impoverishment in village life entered the modern industries as workers. The first generation of factory workers, it appears, came from this distressed and dispossessed section the village people. In the words of Buchanan.... “the factory working group surely comes from the hungry half of the agricultural population, indeed almost wholly from the hungriest quarter or eighth of it”. The factory commission of 1890 reports that most of the factory workers in jute, cotton, bone and paper mills, sugar works, gun and shell factories belonged to the lower castes like *Bagdi*, *Teli*, *Mochi*, *Kaibarta*, *Bairagi* and *Sankara*. They also belonged to the caste of *Tanti* or Weavers. In coal mines the largest single group were *Bauris*, a caste of very low social rank, the majority of whom were under *royts* or landless labourers. The next largest group in coal mining were the *Santhals*, a tribe of crude agriculturists. The remaining section of miners were recruited from similar groups and also from displaced labourers and menials from villages. Among the immigrant labourers in the coalfields, such castes as *Pasis*, *Lodhs*, *Kurmis*, *Ahirs*, *Koeris*, *Chamars* and lower caste Muslims were also there.

However, other studies point out a different pattern of migration of workers from the village. The early working class was not the poorest of the poor. Buchanan's views were based on deduction. The studies of Monis and Chandavarkar show that the lowest castes did not join the industries. Kalpana Ram's study of mine workers also shows something similar. There were 2 reasons for this. The wages were very low and it was not possible for the poor to migrate to the city with their families and work in factories. It would be difficult to maintain a family on low wages. Hence both Monis and Ram note that initially middle castes – those with some land – migrated. Their families stayed behind and the worker would send small amounts of money to supplement the family earning/subsistence from land. Dalits/lower castes did not migrate, or they could not migrate, as they were required to do the unclean activities in the village. Secondly, being landless, they could not subsist on those meagre earnings. Migration of lower castes took place later (after 30-40 years) due to two reasons. The factories (jute and cotton) faced labour shortage, hence wages were increased. Secondly, there was pressure from the British Govt. on the village community to allow untouchables to migrate outside the village.

The view expressed earlier in this unit is Buchanan's and also Max Weber's who had written that industrialisation in India attracted the low castes and the dregs of society.

ii) Emergence of working class

With the growth of modern factory industries, the factory workers gradually

shaped themselves into a distinct category. The concentration of the working class in the cities near the industrial enterprises was an extremely important factor in the formation of the workers as a class. Similar conditions in factories and common living conditions made the workers feel that they had similar experiences and shared interests and react in similar fashion. In other words, the principal factors underlying the growth and formation of the working mass as a class in India in the latter half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, I bear similarities with the advanced countries of Europe. Hence, the consciousness of being exploited by the capitalists/ owners of factories was evident as early as 1888, when workers of Shyamnagar Jute Mill assaulted the manager Mr. Kiddie. That is, the reactions against the exploitation in early phases were marked by riots, affrays, assaults and physical violence.

Side by side with these forms of protest there were also other forms of struggle characteristic of the working class. Typical working class actions such as strike against long hours of work, against wage cuts, against supervisors extortion were increasing in number and the tendency to act collectively was also growing. As early as 1879/80 there was a threat of a strike in Champdani Jute Mill against an attempt by the authorities to introduce a new system of single shift which was unpopular with workers. Presumably because of this strike threat the proposed system was ultimately abandoned. However, the process of class formation among workers in India was marked by fundamental differences as opposed to their European counterparts. It had far reaching consequences on the growth of the Indian working class. These differences were –

- a) Though in Europe also the artisans and craftsmen were dispossessed of their profession, they were not forced out of towns to crowd the village economy. They found employment in the large industries as soon as they were dispossessed of their old professions. In India, after the destruction of traditional handicraft and cottage industry, modern industry did not grow up in its place. The dispossessed artisans and craftsmen were compelled to depend on the village economy and earn livelihood as landless peasants and agricultural labourers.
- b) The gap between destruction of traditional cottage industry and its partial replacement by modern industries was about two to three generations. The dispossessed artisans and craftsmen lost their age-old technical skill and when they entered the modern industries, they did so without any initial skills.
- c) When the workers, after long and close association with agricultural life, entered the modern industries and got transformed into modern workers, they did it in with the full inheritance of the legacy and various superstitions, habits and customs of agricultural life. There was no opportunity for these men to get out of casteism, racialism and religious superstition of Indian social life and harmful influence of medieval ideas. They were born as an Indian working class deeply imbued with obscurantist ideas and backward trends. However, this feature they shared with some of their European counterparts, as well, such as the British working class who too had suffered similar problems.

These peculiarities accompanying the birth of Indian workers acted as hindrances to the development of their modern outlook and class consciousness. In fact the Indian workers were not the only workers

characterised by these peculiarities, rather these were general characteristics of the working class of the colonies and sub-colonies.

iii) Consolidation of the working class

The end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th was marked by the organised national movements and consolidation of the working class. The national movement, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra had already assumed a developed form which exerted a great impact on the later national awakening of the entire country. The partition of Bengal in the year 1905 aroused bitter public indignation and gave rise to mass national upsurge. This political development worked as a favorable condition for the Indian working class too for moving ahead with its economic struggles and raising them to a higher pitch. The period from the beginning of the century till the outbreak of the first world war was marked with widespread and dogged struggles of the workers which were not only economic struggles, but political struggles also. That is, these struggles led to the laying of the foundation of the first trade unions of the country. Moreover, the turn of the century was also marked by the advance in industrialization with concomitant swelling of the working class in numerical strength.

Box 14.03: Trade Unions

In order to defend themselves from the collective might of the employers and the state, the working class organised themselves into trade unions so that they could increase their bargaining power through unity. Therefore trade unions emerged from the spontaneous efforts of the working class. They were not organisations that were preplanned on the basis of some theoretical formulation. In India, the crystallisation of organisations of workers into trade unions took place after the First World War. (IGNOU 2004, BLD-102 Evolution of Workers Organisation 1, Unit 1&2)

On the eve of the First World War, the capitalist development in India got accelerated. There was increase in the number of joint stock company i.e. in 1900 the number of joint stock firms was 1360, which in 1907 rose to 2166. It marked the further increase at the beginning of the first world war when the number of registered firms stood at 2553. However, with the outbreak of war the colonial exploitation of India assumed horrible proportions. The government widely used the country's industrial potential for the needs of war. In all these Indian bourgeoisie got opportunities to prosper. The main advantage accruing to Indian bourgeoisie during war were less competition from major imperialist powers, a large market for country made goods inside and outside the country, war contracts, relatively cheaper raw agricultural materials, lower real wages and higher prices of manufactured goods. But for the working class it was a tough time. This was because the soaring up of prices reduced the living standards of working class. While rural areas were affected by the rise of prices of manufactured goods, the towns faced higher food prices. The expansion of industrialisation saw swelling of numbers of factory workers. In 1919, the large scale industries of the country employed 13,67,000 workers. Of this 306,300 were employed in 277 cotton spinning and weaving mills; 140,800 in 1940 cotton ginning factories and 276,100 in jute factories and presses. The railway shops employed 126,100 workers.

The October socialist revolution and subsequent sweeping mass and working class struggles formed the background under which the first organisation of

the Indian working class called All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) was born. In other words, the end of World War I, the success of the October revolution and the first general crisis of capitalism added new strength to the anti-imperialist struggle of India.

The working class too did not fail to occupy its own place in the anti-imperialist struggle. In this regard it is important to note that the background of political struggle during 1905-8 is the unprecedented dimension of class struggle waged by the Indian working class in the national and international set-up of the post war period against capitalist exploitation bore more significance from the point of view of workers' class-consciousness. Then the birth of the central class organisation of Indian working class at the right moment when national political awakening was at its peak and they were conscious as class.

Box 14.04: Formation of AITUC

“The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the first national federation of trade unions in India was formed in 1920. It was a result of realisation by several people linked with labour that there was a need for a central organisation of labour to coordinate the work of trade unions all over India. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, N.M. Joshi, B.P. Wadia, Diwan Chamanlall, Lala Lajpat Rai, Joseph Baptista and many others were trying to achieve this goal. The formation of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) acted as a catalyst for it..... .

Lala Lajpat Rai became the first president of the AITUC and Joseph Baptista its vice-president. Motilal Nehru and Vithallbhai Patel were also present. The AITUC received a lot of support from the Indian National Congress. There were about 107 unions which were affiliated or sympathetic to the AITUC. Out of these 64 unions had 140,854 members. One notable absence was the Gandhian trade union of Ahmedabad.' The Textile Labour Union. It was a promising beginning and the AITUC continued to grow until it split in 1929. (Upadhyaya, S.B. 2004. 'Evolution of Trade Unions in India', IGNOU BLC-102, Organising the Unorganised. 1)

Recession in Indian industry and economy began already in the year 1922 and continued intensifying. In 1929 the impact of the world economic recession and general crisis of world capitalism veritably shook the Indian economy. Though the World War I provided a number of industries with some temporary advantages or opportunities to expand and saw limited growth of some industries, in a real sense India's industrialisation was absolutely of a sprawling character and without any basic consolidation. The mill owners attempted to reduce wages of the workers. It is the particular misfortune of the Indian working class that they ultimately had to fall victim to the intense rivalry between imperialists and native capitalists. The workers did not lie low before that onslaught, but resisted. So, in order to safeguard its position, the working class of India had to proceed through a path of bitter struggle. The economic offensive reduced the standard of living of the workers. The investigation conducted by the Bombay Labour Office into the working class budget of 1921-23 revealed that the quantity of daily food consumed by the Bombay workers was less than what was available to the prison inmates. An enquiry conducted by the Madras labour department also revealed a similarly shameful state of affairs.

The years 1926-29 constitute an eventful phase of the working class struggle. During this phase the Indian communist movement stood on a firm foundation poised for advance. Communist influence on the working class movement was felt to be very strong. Large scale strikes were conducted during these years. Although the government tried to dub these strikes as 'communist conspiracies', these struggles, led by the communists in many cases were in fact, a sharp manifestation of the simmering discontent of a working class afflicted with crushing problems. Sharpening of struggles, side by side, acted to further widen the outlook of the working class and this was borne out by the very nature of its activities at both national and international levels. The government in response tried to root out the militant section of the working class movement by unleashing draconian measures. With a view to keeping the speeding working-class movement under safe control, they on one hand introduced the 'Trade Union Act. 1926' and on the other passed 'The Trade Disputes Act' and 'Public Safety Act' for tightening up their suppressive designs. The government even tried to incite the public opinion against them.

The world economic crisis of 1931-36 was the most profound and destructive of all economic crises capitalism has ever known. It dealt a shattering blow to the economy, the political foundation and ideology of bourgeoisie and in total effect it further aggravated the general crisis of capitalism. In India the repercussion of this crisis was more fatal. India's economy, where 80 percent of the people were dependent on agriculture came to a breaking point due to a fall in agricultural prices. The plight of the peasantry was beyond all imagination, their purchasing power came down to an all time low. In all industries there was mass retrenchment and wages were slashed. In other words, workers of all categories were hit. It is during these times that building up stiff resistance against the world economic crisis and its effect upon the working class were drastic. In spite of organisational disunity prevailing at that time, the working class waged economic struggle. However, due to the large-scale involvement of the working class also in the anti-imperialist movement of the period, the political dimension of the struggle got precedence over the economic struggle.

World war II broke out on 3rd September 1939, the Viceroy of India proclaimed India to be belligerent. This had a devastating effect on the Indian economy and working class in particular. The colonial government reoriented the economy, whereby the industrial units introduced double to triple shifts of work and leave facilities were curtailed. This was done to cater to the war needs of England. As far as workers were concerned, their economic conditions were miserable in the pre-war period, and the new war made the situation much worse. This was because of the steady fall in the wage rates across the industry. Though there was a reversal in the trends of wage rate from 1936 onwards, the abnormal rise in prices had not only offset the rise in wages, the wages of the workers in real terms had gone down. In such a situation the working class of India had to wage a struggle for protecting the existing standard of living. The working class embarked on a series of strikes in Bombay, Kanpur, Calcutta, Bangalore, Jamshedpur, Dhanbad, Jharia, Nagpur, Madras, Digboi of Assam or in a word throughout the entire country. Moreover, the greatest working class action in India was the anti-war strike which was organised in Bombay on 2nd October 1939 and was joined by 90,000 workers. This event along with other struggles indicates that during this period the outlook of the Indian working class did not remain confined solely to the economic demands. The working class rather fully kept pace with the

national and international political developments and played a key role in the political struggles. In such an event the imperialist government directed severe attacks to forestall the struggle of the working class.

The defeat of fascism and end of the World War II saw the emergence of the Indian working class as a highly organised, class conscious and uncompromising force against the colonialist. The upsurge of world democratic national liberation forces that followed had its impact in India too. An unprecedented and irresistible struggle for national liberation and democratic advance engulfed the country. Side-by-side the working class had to engage in sharp economic struggles. The reason was that after the war there was large-scale retrenchment of the wartime recruits and reduction of wages. Against all this, the working class resolutely started the struggle. The phenomenal rise in the number of strike actions (1629) in the year 1946 was an indication of the stiff resistance. All India Trade Union Congress raised the demand of stopping retrenchment, minimum wage, eight hours work, health insurance scheme, old age pension, unemployment allowance and several other social security measures. To suppress these, the government took recourse to extreme measures such as police firing and several other repressive measures. In this many workers had to lay down their lives while upholding their cause.

As soon as India became independent, the political climate of the country changed. This was particularly so for the working class. That is, till Independence political and economic struggle of the working class was directed against the colonial masters. Moreover, it was a broad political front against imperialism where everybody from the national bourgeoisie to the working class rallied with one common objective. But with Independence began a new political dynamics, where power was in the hands of capitalists and landlords. Their economic interests were directly counter to those of the working class. With this, the objective of the struggle of the working class also saw a change i.e. to end the rule of the capitalist and establish socialism in the real sense of the term. This was thought to be the precondition for growing class-consciousness, which the majority of the working class of India had not yet realised.

Though the achievement of Independence, roused immense hopes and aspirations among all sections of the society, it was accompanied by a huge rise in prices and continuous fall in the real wages of the workers. Moreover, the ruling classes had embarked upon a path of building capitalism in the newly independent country. This brought in its wake immense hardships and suffering to the toiling masses which generated powerful resistance of the working classes all over the country.

Nature and Structure of the Working Class Today

Given such an eventful history and evolution of the working class in India, it is worthwhile to examine the nature and structure of the working class in the present circumstances. As mentioned above, due to the existence of multi-structural economy and effects of primordial affiliations, a variety of forms of the working class exists in India. On top of all the differences, the differences in wage is also the basis of divisions among the working class. On the basis of wage, there are four types of workers. First, those workers who are permanent employees of the large factory sector and get family wage. (By 'family wage' it is meant that the wage of the worker should be sufficient to maintain not only the individual but also the worker's family.

For further details see Nathan, Dev, 1987'). They are mostly employed in the public sector enterprises and modern sectors of petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and engineering. Second, there is a large and preponderant section of the working class that does not get a family wage. This includes workers in the older industries like cotton and jute textiles, sugar and paper. Even the permanent workers in the tea plantation come in the same category because the owners refuse to accept the norm of family wage for an individual worker. Third, there is a section of the working class at the bottom of the wage scale – the mass of contract and sometimes casual labourers in industry, including construction, brick making and other casual workers. Fourth, below all these lie a reserve army of labour, who work in petty commodities production in petty trading, ranging from hawking to rag-picking. They are generally engaged in the informal sector and carry on for the want of sufficient survival wage. The existence of a majority of workers, who are not paid family wage means that either the worker gets some form of supplement from other non-capitalist sectors or the worker and his/her family cut down their consumption below the minimum standard. This also means that there is more than one wage earner per household. As Das Gupta (1986) mentions both men and women work in the plantation or Bidi manufacturing. At the same time they also supplement these earnings with various kinds of agricultural activities including not only cultivation as such but also poultry and milk production. Even in the plantation workers are given plots of land with which to carry on agricultural production. It is the supplementary agricultural activities that enable wages in these sectors to be kept low. In this sense, supplementary activities by the workers under pre-capitalist relations of production is a tribute to the capitalist sector.

Not only is there wage differential among the working class, there is also variation in the terms of working conditions. Hence, better paid labour has also much greater job security. However the workers on the lower end of the wage scale have not only job security but also considerable extra-economic coercion and personal bondage which leads to lack of civil rights. Similarly, working conditions for the low paid workers are uniformly worse than for high paid workers. So, in the same plant or site there is a clear difference in the safety measures for the two groups of workers. The situation worsens further with regard to women workers. For example, women are not allowed to work in the steel plants for safety reasons, but are not prohibited to be employed on the same site as contract labour.

Reflection and Action 14.02

Visit a local factory or cottage industry in your city/town or village. Find out about the type of workers in that factory.

Ask two workers at least, who belong to the organised sector, about their social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Do they have links with their villages? Are they members of a Trade Union? If so, what are the benefits of belonging to the Trade Union?

Now select atleast two workers from the same factory who are from the unorganised sector. Ask the same questions to them which you asked the organised sector workers.

Based on these interviews, write a report of two pages on 'The Different Positions of Organised and Unorganised sector workers in an Indian Factory.' Compare your report with those of your peers at your Study Centre.

With such major divisions amongst the working classes of India on the basis of wage, one would expect that there would be large scale mobility among the workers. So a worker would start as casual or contract labour in a firm and then would move to permanent employment either in the same or other firms. A study by Deshpande (1979) of Bombay labour found the reverse to be true. That is, around 87 per cent of the regular employees, who had changed their jobs had started as regular employees and only 13 per cent had started as casual labour. In this regard Harriss (1982), who conducted a study in Coimbatore, reported that ‘ individuals do not move easily between sectors of the labour market. Among the 826 households surveyed there were only less than 20 cases of movement from unorganised into organised sector. Many in the unorganised sector had the requisite skills, experience and education for factory jobs. But they lack the right connections or to put it in another way, they do not belong to the right social network’. This means that mobility to a large extent is dependent upon the way recruitments are done. The above-mentioned study of Bombay labour, though dealing with private sector, found that recruitments are done mainly through friends and relatives. A study in Ahmedabad by Subramaniam and Papola (1973) found that 91 per cent of the jobs were secured through introduction by other workers. This in a way then denies the disadvantaged groups, access to the high wage employment. In public sector, though a substantial portion of the vacancies are filled through employment exchange, it does not in any way mean that the casual, contract or other disadvantaged groups have equal access.

14.6 Social Background of Indian Working Class

Indian working class, as mentioned earlier, came from diverse social backgrounds in which primordial identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion and language played very important roles. In recent years, the significance of these elements has been reduced but they do persist nonetheless. In this regard, the Ahmedabad study (1973), points out that where jobs are secured through introduction by other workers, the latter was a blood relation in 35 per cent of the cases, belonged to the same caste in another 44 percent and belonged to the same native place in another 12 per cent. Friends helped in 7 per cent of the cases. Several other studies have pointed out the role of kinship ties in getting employment (Gore 1970). Kinship ties not only play a significant role in securing employment, but also in the placement in the wage scale. Five studies of Pune, Kota, Bombay, Ahmedabad and Bangalore covering large number of industries found that 61 per cent of workers were upper caste Hindus (Sharma 1970). The dominant position of the workers from upper caste was also brought out in a study of Kerala. This study points out that in higher income jobs upper castes dominate whereas Dalits/adivasis have preponderance in low wage jobs. The middle castes are concentrated in middle to bottom ranges. Even in public sector, the representation of backward castes, schedule castes and tribes is not up to their proportion in the population. Moreover, it seems that caste based division of labour is followed in the class III and IV jobs in government and public sector enterprises. So the jobs of sweepers are reserved for dalits and adivasis. In coal mines, hard physical labour of loading and pushing the coaltubs is done by dalits and advasis. In steel plants the production work in the intense heat of coke oven and blast furnace is mainly done by advasis and dalits. This is because, as Deshpande (1979) points out, of ‘pre labour market characteristic’ such as education and land holding. So those who possessed more land and education ended up in a higher wage sector. But then if upper and lower

caste people own comparable levels of landholding and education, the upper caste worker will get into a higher segment of the wage than the lower caste worker. This is because of the continuing importance of caste ties in recruitment. Caste also serves the function of ensuring the supply of cheap labour for different jobs with the fact of not paying more than what is necessary. In other words, the depressed conditions of adivasis and dalits helps in ensuring a supply of labour, who can be made to work at the mere subsistence level (Nathan 1987). Hence, caste on one hand plays a role in keeping the lower sections of the society in the lower strata of the working class, on the other hand, the upper caste get a privilege in the labour market. Further, caste is not only a matter of marriage and to an extent residence, but more so a continuing pool of social relation for the supply of various kinds of labour for the capitalist mode of production (ibid.).

14.7 Conclusion

The working class, which is the product of capitalist relations of production, came into being with the industrial revolution and subsequent industrialisation in England in particular and Europe in general. In this relation of production, unlike other epochs, they did not own anything except the labour, which they sold for survival. At the other spectrum, there were capitalists who not only owned all the means of production but also appropriated all the surplus generated out of these relations of production.

The working class at the conceptual level seems to be fairly simple, but if one tries to define it, the problem magnifies. The reason is that this is not a homogeneous entity. Rather it is a complex, contradictory and constantly changing entity. Another reason is that the concept of 'class-consciousness', is very slippery with regard to the working class. The consequence of this is that it is often proclaimed that either the working class is shrinking in size or everybody except a few at the top are working class. However the fact is that working class is a distinct entity, with characteristics of its own. In India, the situation is much more complex because of several reasons like, (a) the forced intrusion of British capital in India; (b) simultaneous existence of multiple relations of production; and (c) never ending identification of working mass with primordial features such as caste, religion and other ethnic divisions of the society.

The coming into being and consolidation of the working class in the world as well as in India, has been affected by local and international events of both economic and political nature. So for carrying out further studies on the working class, these peculiarities have to be taken into account.

14.8 Further Reading

Holmstrom, M. 1991: 'Who Are the 'Working Class'?' in Dipanker Gupta edited *Social Stratification*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi

Sen, Sukomal 1997 : *Working Class of India-History of Emergence & Movement 1830-1996*. K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta

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Unit 15

The Middle Class

Contents

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Concept of Class
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- 15.4 Evolution of the Middle Class in India
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- 15.6 Values Related to Family, Marriage and Women's Status amongst the Middle Class
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- 15.8 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- ≈ explain the concept of class;
- ≈ discuss the concept of 'middle class';
- ≈ outline the evolution of middle class in India;
- ≈ describe the link between modernity and the middle class in contemporary India; and
- ≈ discuss the values related to family, marriage and status of women amongst the middle class.

15.1 Introduction

Analysis of the middle class in contemporary capitalist society has been lacking in systematic discussion. This is also the case in a society such as India. There has been an ongoing debate on what constitutes the middle class in India. However, a comprehensive understanding of the middle class in India is still far from complete. In this Unit, we endeavour to understand the concept of 'middle class' in India in contemporary times. We have divided this Unit into four sections. In the first section, we discuss the concept of class from various perspectives following which, in the second section, we focus on the definition of middle class and its evolution in India. The third section will be devoted to understanding the middle class in contemporary India. The fourth section explains the values related to family, marriage and kinship amongst the middle class; and in the final section, we bring the discussion to a conclusion.

15.2 Concept of Class

Before entering into any theoretical discussion on what constitutes the middle class and whether India has a middle class, it becomes pertinent to understand 'class' as a concept. Right from the time of classical thinkers, myriad viewpoints on 'class' have been put forth. Karl Marx defined social class as an aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organisation of production. In Marx's theory, social classes in different historical periods are given different names such as freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, oppressor

and oppressed. Classes are distinguished from each other by the difference in their respective positions in the economy (Bendix & Lipset, 1967: 7). Since social class is constituted by the function which its members perform in the process of production, the question arises why the organisation of production is the basic determinant of social class. Fundamental to this theory was Marx's belief that work is man's basic form of self-realisation. Stating the four aspects of production, Marx propounded that these explain why man's efforts to provide for his subsistence underlie all change in history. Following from this, Marx asserted that the fundamental determinant of class is the way in which the individual cooperates with others in the satisfaction of his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. Other indices such as income, consumption patterns, educational attainment or occupation are so many clues to the distribution of material goods and of prestige symbols (ibid:8). Interpreting Karl Marx's viewpoint, Lipset and Bendix explain that the income or occupation of an individual, according to Marx, is not an indication of his class position i.e of his position in the production process. Marx believed that a man's position in the production process provided the crucial life experience, which would eventually determine the beliefs and actions of that individual.

As Marx saw it, the organisation of production provides the necessary but not a sufficient basis for the existence of social classes. Taking the examples of bourgeoisie and proletariat, Marx illustrated the manner in which he envisaged the emergence of a social class. Put simply, Marx viewed social class as a condition of group life, which was constantly generated by the organisation of production. He went on to elaborate that the existence of common conditions and the realisation of common interests are only the necessary, not the sufficient bases for the development of a social class. Only when the members of a 'potential' class enter into an association for the organised pursuit of their common aims, does a class in Marx's sense exist. Marx did not simply identify a social class with the fact that a large group of people occupied the same objective position in the economic structure of a society. Instead he laid stress on the importance of subjective awareness as a precondition of organising the class successfully for the economic and the political struggle. Marx felt that the pressures engendered by capitalism would determine its development in the future. Subjective awareness, in his view, was an indispensable element in the development of the social class and this would arise with growing contradictions inherent in capitalism.

Writing on Marx, Erik Olin Wright points out that although the former did not systematically answer the question 'What constitutes a class?', yet most of his work revolves around two problems: the elaboration of abstract structural maps of class relations and the analysis of concrete conjunctural maps of classes as actors (Wright, 1985: 6). From the abstract structural account of classes comes the characteristically polarized map of class relations that runs through most of Marx's analysis of the capitalist mode of production in *Capital*. In contrast to this, the conjunctural political analyses are characterised by a complex picture of classes, fractions, factions, social categories, strata and other actors on the political stage. Elaborating on this further, Wright argues that the distinction between class structure and class formation is a basic, if often implicit, distinction in class analysis. Class structure refers to the structure of social relations into which individuals enter which determine their class interests (ibid:9). Class formation on the other hand, refers to the formation of organised collectivities within that

class structure on the basis of the interests shaped by that class structure. Put simply, if class structure is defined by social relations between classes, class formation is defined by social relations within classes, social relations which forge collectivities engaged in struggle.

Taking the cue from Marx, Max Weber made classifications such as 'classes', 'status groups' and 'parties' based on distribution of power within a community. He defined 'class' as when 1) a number of people have in common a specific casual component of their life chances in so far as 2) this component is represented exclusively by economic interests in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and 3) is represented under the conditions of the commodity or labor markets. In Weber's theory, class situation is ultimately the 'market situation' (Weber, 1946). He goes on to elaborate that the factor that creates class is unambiguously an economic interest and only those interests involved in the existence of the market.

Joseph Schumpeter states that there are basically four problems that beset the class theory in Sociology. In doing so he takes into account the scientific rather than the philosophical, and the sociological rather than the immediate economic. The four problems are: 1) There is the problem of the nature of class and as part of this problem, the function of class in the vital processes of the social whole. 2) Problem of social cohesion – the factors that constitute every social class. 3) The problem of class formation – the question of why the social whole has never been homogeneous revealing organic stratification. 4) This problem is wholly distinct from the series of problems that are concerned with the concrete causes and conditions of an individual determined, historically given class structure.

Class, as defined by Schumpeter, is more than an aggregation of class members. A class is aware of its identity as a whole, sublimates itself as such, has its own peculiar life and characteristic "spirit". However, a noted phenomenon is that class members behave towards one another in a fashion characteristically different from their conduct towards members of other classes. They are in closer association with one another; they understand one another better; they work more readily in concert; they close ranks and erect barriers against the outside; they look into the same segment of the world with the same eyes, from the same viewpoint, in the same direction. Social intercourse within class barriers is promoted by the similarity of manners and habits of life, or things that are evaluated in a positive or negative sense, that arouse interest. Classes, once they have come into being, harden in their mould and perpetuate themselves, even when the social conditions that created them have disappeared.

Pointing to the history of the term 'social class', Stanislaw Ossowski argued that from the second half of the 18th century onwards, class has been an interesting subject for sociologists. He considers two specifying versions of the concept of 'class'.

- a) Social class is seen as a group distinguished in respect of relations of property. This is basically the economic version of social class.
- b) The class system is contrasted with group systems in the social structure in which an individual's membership of the group is institutionally determined and in which privileges or discriminations result from the individual's ascription to a certain group. This is the result not of birth

or an official document such as title of nobility but is the consequence of social status otherwise achieved.

In various social systems one can observe two or more coexisting types of the relation of class dependence. Three assumptions which appear to be common to all conceptions of a 'class society' can be stated in the following manner:

- 1) The classes constitute a system of the most comprehensive groups in the social structure.
- 2) The class division concerns social statuses connected with a system of privileges and discriminations not determined by biological criteria.
- 3) The membership of individuals in a social class is relatively permanent.

Out of myriad ways of understanding class, one can elicit three or four such characteristics. They are by no means of equal importance in the history of social thought.

- 1) The vertical order of social classes: the existence of superior and inferior categories of social statuses which are superior or inferior in respect of some system of privileges and discriminations. Accepting such a class structure would mean class stratification.
- 2) Distinctness of permanent class interests.
- 3) Class consciousness — involves not only class identification but also a consciousness of the place of one's class in the class hierarchy, a realisation of class distinctness, class interests and possibly of class solidarity as well.
- 4) Social isolation — the absence of closer social contacts: social distance. In the US, according to this definition, a social class is the largest group of people whose members have intimate social access to one another. A society is a class society in respect of this characteristic if there exist within it distinct barriers to social intercourse and if class boundaries can be drawn by means of an analysis of interpersonal relations. Not only is social isolation involved but also the effects of this isolation and the effects of differences in the degree of access to the means of consumption.

These class criteria are not independent of each other. Given the fact that these characteristics are interdependent, Ossowski concludes that there could be various definitions of class. The pertinent question at this juncture is how do we define middle class in India in general and in contemporary times in particular.

15.3 Concept of the 'Middle Class'

The problems which the middle class pose for the social scientist are typically metropolitan in character and nationwide in scope. C. Wright Mills states that a city's population may be stratified in the following manner: a) objectively in terms of such bases as property or occupation or the amount of income received from either or both sources. Information about these bases may be confined to the present or may include b) extractions, intermarriages and job histories of members of given strata. Subjectively, strata may be constructed according to who does the rating: c) each individual may be asked to assign himself a position, d) the interviewer may intuitively rate each individual or e) each individual may be asked to stratify the population and then to give his image of the people on each level.

Citing Dahrendorf (1959: 51-57), one finds that four different positions can be identified regarding the class situation of the new middle class. In the first position it is held that since most middle class occupations have been structurally differentiated from what were previously ruling class occupations, so the new middle class is an extension of the existent capitalist ruling class (Bendix, 1963). In the second position it is held that the middle class is really much closer to the working class because both groups do not own the means of production. Any identification with the ruling class is merely false consciousness that will disappear once the middle class comes to realise their class interests to be coincidental with the working class (Klingender, 1935 & Wright Mills C., 1956). A third position is that there is no such thing as the middle class but instead there are two different groupings with opposed interests, bureaucrats with ruling class authority and white collar workers with a proletarian class situation (Dahrendorf, 1959). Finally there is a position where it is maintained that the middle class is in a structurally ambivalent situation (Lockwood, 1958).

Elaborating on the growth of the middle class, John Urry argues that Marx's account of the rise of the middle class was in terms of a growing surplus that demanded a class or classes to consume more than they produced and an increasingly complicated industrial structure which needed non productive functionaries to service it. In 'Theories of Surplus Value', Marx goes on to argue that as capitalism develops there is an expansion of the middle class. Taking the cue from Marx, Urry propounded that a historical analysis of the growth of the middle class has illustrated that with the market structure there has been the development of a highly significant middle class which does not own the means of production but is a powerful favoured status situation in the structure of workplace relationships (Urry, 1996: 255).

Like Marx and Weber, most modern sociologists use economic factors as the basic criteria for differentiating social classes. Anthony Giddens identifies three major classes in advanced capitalist society. They are upper class based on the 'ownership of property in the means of production', a middle class based on the 'possession of educational and technical qualifications' and a lower or working class based on the 'possession of manual labour power'. These classes, in Giddens's opinion, are distinguished by their differing relationships to the forces of production and by their particular strategies for obtaining economic reward in a capitalist economy. Another viewpoint regarding class is the functional perspective whereby functional requirements of society determines differential occupational rewards. An alternative explanation is that power is a determinant of occupational rewards.

This is a very basic understanding of the concept of the middle class drawing our attention to 'middle class in India'. First and foremost, it becomes significant to delve into the evolution of the middle class in India.

Reflection and Action 15.01

Read carefully the section on 'middle class' in India. Observe your own family and your immediate neighbours. Write a report of one page on "Me and My Class" where you state, to which class you think you belong and why? Discuss your report with other students at your Study Centre and your Academic Counsellor.

15.4 Evolution of the Middle Class in India

B.B. Misra (1961) in his seminal work on the middle classes in India had concluded that institutions conducive to capitalist growth were not lacking in India prior to the British rule. Pre-British India did witness an Indian artisan industry as well as occupational specialisation and additionally a separate class of merchants. The guild power remained purely money power unsupported by any authority of a political or military nature. The British rule resulted in the emergence of a class of intermediaries serving as a link between people and the new rulers. In Misra's viewpoint, there was a fundamental revolution in social relations and class structure in India. The emergent class of intermediaries was the middle class that continued to grow in strength and prosperity with the progress of foreign rule. Significantly, the establishment of trading relations followed by the rule of the British East India Company set the stage in the creation of this class. Furthermore, as part of their educational policy, the British attempted to create a class comparable to their own to assist the former in the administration of the country (Misra, 1961:10). The aim of the British was to create a class of imitators and not originators of new values and methods (Ahmad & Reifeld, 2001:8).

As Pavan K. Verma points out in his work on the middle class, from the circumstances of their origin and growth, the members of the educated class such as government servants, lawyers, college teachers and doctors constituted the bulk of the Indian middle class. This middle class, in Verma's opinion, was largely dominated by the traditional higher castes (Verma, 1998: 27). Ahmad and Reifeld argue that in its formation and the role played in history, the Indian middle class bore close resemblance, at least in some parts, to its European counterparts (Ahmad & Reifeld, 2001). Like their counterparts in Europe earlier, some of the entrants to commercial activity either as agents or independently in the 17th and the first half of the 18th century amassed great wealth and acquired social status far beyond what they could aspire to have in the structure of economic relations in the traditional society. But alongside, differences existed, too. While the European middle class was independent, the Indian middle class was under foreign rule. Initially, the middle class helped in the establishment of British power and promotion of European commerce and enterprise in India. It was only after the 'Mutiny' that it began to assume the political role of competitor for power with the British. With the passage of time, the competitor role adopted by an important section of the middle class came to dominate over that of a collaborator and this continued till the very end of the Raj. Ahmad and Reifeld conclude that from the beginning of the 20th century, the Indian middle class had come to pose a serious challenge to the continuance of the British power. It was instrumental in arousing national consciousness and giving a sense of unity as a nation to the people (Ahmad and Reifeld, 2001:10).

Sanjay Joshi, in his study of the making of the middle class in colonial India, attempted to explain why traditional sociological indicators of income and occupation cannot take us very far in understanding the category of middle class. Though the economic background of the middle class was important, the power and constitution of the middle class in India was based not on the economic power it wielded, which was minimal, but on the ability of its members to be cultural entrepreneurs. Being middle class was primarily a project of 'self fashioning' (Joshi, 2001: 4). Joshi articulated that the definition and power of the middle class, from its propagation of modern ways of life,

heterogeneity was an attribute of the middle class. The rapid expansion of a new middle class in India during the last decade of the 20th century and its increasing influence in many parts of the public sphere constitute one of the most important changes in India's contemporary history.

Box 15.01: Rural and Urban Middle Class

According to Yogendra Singh (1991), if we compare the rural middle classes with the urban, we find one major similarity. The rural middle classes have ideological affinity at one level with the urban middle classes as both of them share conservative and narrow utilitarian ethos. But the rural middle classes also harbour, on another level, intense antagonism and conflict with the urban middle classes, entrepreneurs and professional groups.

The antagonism and conflict has arisen due to certain historical reasons. The process of development in agriculture has after a period of time slowed down due to structural technological stagnation. He believes that even the so called rich peasants have over the past few years confronted the prospect of downward mobility in terms of social and economic status due to unfavourable price policy, stagnation in agriculture productivity, fragmentation of landholding due to rise in population and non-availability of other avenues of employment for their youth. He says that this post-Green Revolution under-development in agriculture further reinforces the alienation of middle classes in rural areas from the urban and industrial middle classes. This fact has been a setback to their level of aspiration which had seen its peak during the Green Revolution phase.

Andre Beteille writes that the middle class is not only very large but also highly differentiated internally to such an extent that it may be more appropriate to speak of the middle classes than of the middle class in India, stresses upon the heterogeneous nature of its social composition (Beteille, 2001: 73). The recent shifts in the economic policy in favour of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation have generated a wide interest in the middle class, its size, composition and its social values. Andre Beteille views middle class in India as part of a relatively new social formation based on religion, caste and kinship. In Beteille's opinion, middle class values in India are difficult to characterise because they are still in the process of formation and have still not acquired a stable form (Beteille, 2001:74). As such, they are marked by deep and pervasive antinomies meaning contradictions, oppositions and tensions inherent in a set of norms and values.

Public discussion of the middle class in the last 10 years has been driven largely by media. There is hardly anything substantial in the structure of the middle class in the sociological literature. The discussion of the middle class values is constrained by the absence of reliable and systematic data on the size and composition of the class. Estimates of its size vary from under 100 million to over 250 million persons. There is no single criterion for defining the middle class (Beteille, 2001: 76). Occupational functions and employment status are the two most significant criteria although education and income are also widely used. The new middle class, according to Beteille is not only defined by occupation but also by education. In India, the origins of the middle class derive not so much from an industrial revolution or a democratic revolution as from colonial rule. In the last 50 years, the middle class has grown steadily.

Commenting on the growing middle class, Gurcharan Das (Das, 2000) stated that although the middle class is composed of many occupations, commerce has always been at the center- as the businessman mediated between the landed upper classes and the labouring lower classes. The 20th century witnessed an entrepreneurial surge in the last decade after 1991 and the expansion of the middle class in the last two decades after 1980. After growing at a rate of 3.5% a year from 1950 to 1980, India's economic growth rate increased to 5.6% in the decade of the 80s. It climbed further to 6.3% in the decade of 1990s. In these 2 decades the middle class more than tripled. Between 1998- 2000, \$2.5 billion in venture capital funds have come to India (McKinsey's studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between the availability of venture funds and the proliferation of business start ups). Writing about this middle class, Das argued that as a result of changing trends, a new kind of entrepreneur has emerged in India (Das, 2000:195). As Gurcharan Das notes, although the reforms after 1991 have been slow, hesitant and incomplete, yet they have set in motion a process of profound change in Indian society. It is Joseph Schumpeter who coined the term 'entrepreneur'. Contrary to earlier times, the new millionaires today are looked up to with pride and even reverence. For they are a new meritocracy – highly educated entrepreneur professionals who are creating value by innovating in the global knowledge economy.

The emergence of a sizeable middle class in the last decades is widely regarded with hope by the modernisers and fear by the traditionalists as the single most important development in the ongoing transformation of Indian society (Kakar). According to a survey by NCAER the middle class grew from 8% of the population in 1986 to 18% in 2000 which is about 185 million. It appears that for many modern sociologists of India, the emergent middle class is a harbinger of modernity but the question of great relevance is how does one define modernity. Can one define the middle class as modern, based on material progress or is the middle class ethos to be analysed in a more deep rooted manner with regard to the basis of formation of social relations among people who constitute the middle class. In the subsequent section, the focus will be on understanding the rising middle class in contemporary India and whether we can define it as modern, traditional or as Beteille (Beteille, 2001) labels it, as 'transitional'.

15.5 Modernity and the Middle Class in Contemporary India

We live in modern times – times that are witnessing rapid changes in the technological, economic, political and social realms. Microwaves, DVDs, palmtop computers, cloning, genetic manipulation and so on all appear to corroborate how much more technologically advanced contemporary society is in comparison to the society of the past. Today's world appears to be peculiarly dynamic, a world which is in the process of constant change and transformation. According to Marshall Berman, to live in a modern world is to live in 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish' (Berman 1988:15). Essentially, modernity signifies the destruction of past forms of life, values and identities combined with the production of new ones. One of the major outcomes of this has been the emergence of 'consumer culture' or 'consumerism' whereby culture is constructed through consumption, not just production. Consumer culture is bound up with central values, practices and institutions that define modernity, such as choice, individualism and market relations. Primarily this

consumerist ideology involves a process of innovation, of constant turnover and novelty. Extending viewpoints of scholars such as Simmel (1972) and Campbell (1987) to present times, it can be stated that along with money making, consumption of goods has become an end in itself. Fundamentally both of these represent a break from tradition. In the 20th century we witnessed consumer culture reaching its apogee in the West. Within this contemporary consumer culture, what has developed is a 'lifestyle' connoting individuality, self-expression and stylistic self-consciousness (Featherstone 1991:86).

Most often, the terms 'consumption' and 'consumer culture' are used interchangeably, but a sociological analysis reveals a definite distinction between the two. Two important features that distinguish consumer culture from consumption are:

- a) Constant turnover of commodities with emphasis being laid on newer and changed versions of goods. One consumes not because one needs something but to be in fashion.
- b) A generalised consumption – it does not remain confined to the upper echelons of society but becomes all pervading.

In modern consumeristic societies, people are no longer locked in their respective positions. Lifestyles can be and are improved upon constantly. Moreover, it becomes a generalised phenomenon with all classes of people being subjected to a surfeit of images and signs because of advertising and being active participants in consumer culture. What is present is essentially, 'fluidization of consumption' i.e. freeing up the previously static and relatively fixed spatial and temporal dimensions of social life (Lee 1993:124-133). Also consumption is viewed as a stage in a process of communication i.e. an act of deciphering and decoding. What is required is to be able to move from the primary stratum of meaning, which one can grasp on the basis of ordinary experience to the stratum of secondary meanings that is the level of meaning of what is signified (Bourdieu 1979:2). Therefore, in a modern society there is a strong tendency for social groups to seek to classify and order their social circumstances as well as use cultural goods as means of demarcation and as communicators that establish boundaries between some people and build bridges with others (Jameson 1991:XX of Introduction). The process by which taste becomes a process of differentiation leading to creation of distinctions between different categories of goods and between social groups is an ongoing one. Contemporary Western societies have been witnessing, what Mike Featherstone refers to as the 'doubly symbolic aspect of goods'. Symbolism is not only evident in the design and imagery of production and marketing processes, but the symbolic association of goods may be utilised and renegotiated to emphasise the differences in lifestyle which demarcate social relationships (Featherstone 1991:86). This leads us to conclude that a critical aspect of a modern consumer society is the presence of an open system of stratification with avenues of upward mobility being available to all.

“Rather than reflexively adopting a lifestyle through tradition or habit, new heroes of consumer culture make 'lifestyle' a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in particularity of assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experience, appearance and bodily dispositions, they design together a lifestyle.”(ibid.: 86)

goods, is able to destabilise the original notion of use or meaning of goods and attach to them new images and signs which can summon up a whole range of associated feelings and desires (Featherstone 1999:274). This, in turn, results in impulsive purchase of newer and latest versions of products. In fact, the commodity becomes the primary index of the social relations of modern capitalist societies. Modern societies experience the reflexivity process at both the institutional and personal levels that is decisive for the production and change of modern systems and modern forms of social organisation (Giddens 1991:1).

True modernity cannot be defined only in terms of material progress. In order to be able to get a comprehensive view of whether or not a social order can be called modern, we need to view it through a larger prism, that of the kind of interpersonal relationships existing among people. Modernity confronts the individuals with a diversity of choices in all spheres of life. Universalism, achievement and individualism are the important ingredients of a modern social order. This affects the most personal and intimate aspects of individuals including self-identity. As the ties of tradition are loosened and compulsiveness of repetition disappears, new opportunities are created for individuals in society. The availability of more options implies that people have to make more decisions. Choices are not restricted to consumer items alone but extend into all realms of personal lives of people. This allows individuals to negotiate about conditions of all social relations, norms and ethics that would form the basis of relations between men and women, between friends and between parents and children. Tradition no longer constitutes the basis of individuals' decisions and actions.

Following from earlier discussions whereby it has been reiterated that the pace of growth of the middle class has been accelerated by changing economic policies in the post liberalisation era in India, it becomes pertinent to analyse whether the material progress in India, more so in the case of the middle class, is witnessing commensurate changes in the values and attitudes of those belonging to the middle class to label them as 'modern'. In a research study undertaken among the urban populace of a metropolitan society such as Delhi (Chandra, 2003), one of the primary objectives was to precisely gauge the level of modernity existing among those belonging to the middle class- upper and lower. To begin with, a class has been defined in terms of income, occupation and quality of dwelling area. Those living in a metropolitan centre such as New Delhi appear to be modern in terms of dress and eating habits. But a more profound issue that needs to be thoroughly investigated is whether a modern ethos is visible in the attitudes of people at a deeper level. It is by analysis of the basis for the formation of interpersonal relationships among individuals, that one can make an attempt to categorise the middle class as 'traditional', 'modern' or maybe 'transitional'.

The affluent consumers, those belonging to the upper class and upper middle class seem to indulge in a rapid turnover of products in order to differentiate themselves from the masses as well as maintain commonalities with their own kind. For most of the super rich consumers, irrespective of age and sex, possession of the latest consumer durables as well as non- durables connotes being technologically updated and in fashion. They are positively inclined to wearing designer labels and eating out. Acts of consumption are taken as critical indicators of a modern status by them. Even in the upper middle class, possession of durables such as air conditioners, television sets, computers and the like are viewed as necessities in the contemporary age.

Throughout the research, it was discernible that this group of respondents want to emulate the affluent in their preferences but is unable to replace the goods at the same pace as the rich do because of financial constraints. Significantly, the upper middle class are also buying consumer durables of international brands in the post liberalisation era. On the whole, they appear to be as fashion conscious as the affluent. In fact, apparently the upper middle class are choosing clothes and places for eating out that enable them to categorise themselves with the elite.

Reflection and Action 15.02

Do you think you are a modern person? What do you think constitutes modernity in your opinion? Think about it and write an essay of about two pages on “Why I am a modern person?” or “Why I am not a modern person?” Discuss your essay with other students at your Study Centre.

On the other hand, the lower middle class respondents are unable to participate in consumer culture due to lack of adequate resources. Although the politics of culture of consumption has still not trickled down, yet there is a definite change in their patterns of consumption. It is quite important to take note of the fact that even those belonging to the lower middle class are changing their consumption patterns in their endeavour to be categorized as ‘modern’. This has been facilitated by a number of exchange schemes. However, while purchasing durables and non-durables emphasis is laid on the utilitarian aspects and the price of the required product. In clothes, the younger generation are choosing cheaper imitations of the original designer labels as they are affordable. The concept of ‘eating out’ is catching on. What differentiates them from the upper and upper middle classes, is that they do not eat in expensive restaurants.

Box 15.02: The Great Indian Middle Class

The Indian middle class is not just growing at a rapid pace, it has also become the segment driving consumption of “luxury” goods like cars and air-conditioners, according to a survey by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER).

While the middle class, which the survey defines as households with annual incomes between Rs. 2 lakh and Rs. 10 lakh at 2001-02 prices accounted for barely 5.7% of all Indian households in 2001-02, it already owned 60% of all the cars and Acs in the country and 25% of all TVs, fridges and motorcycles.

Read that with the projection that the middle class will account for 13% of India’s population by 2009-10 and you can see why the NCAER sees huge growth potential in the market for cars and mobikes. The study predicts that the market for cars will grow at 20% a year, while bikes will clock growth of 16% per annum till 2009-10.

Fridges and colour TV makers can hope to cash in on the boom too, with projected growth rates in the range of 10% to 11%. The market for radios, electric irons, bicycles and wrist watches too will grow, though by a more modest 7-9% a year.

On the flip side, black & white TVs, scooters and mopeds may be hit, with the report suggesting that demand for these goods will actually decline.

The projected consumption boom isn't just restricted to urban India. On the contrary, the survey suggests that the urban market for some relatively low-end products will be saturated by the end of the decade, while rural demand picks up. As a result, 80% of radios, 65% of colour TVs, 48% of mobikes, 40% of scooters and 33% of fridges will be owned by the rural populace by 2009-10. Indeed, the projection is that with rural incomes rising, even the demand for cars will grow in the villages to the point where the country-side will account for 11% of all cars by the end of the decade. The survey - The Great Indian Middle Class-categorieses the population into four income groups. The "deprived" are those with household incomes below Rs. 90,000 a year and they constituted just under 72% of all households in 2001-02. By 2009-10, that share will be down to 51.6%, says the survey.

The next step up the income ladder consists of the "aspirers" – those with annual household incomes between Rs. 90,000 and Rs. 2 lakh. This category constituted a little under 22% of all households in 2001-02, but is likely to rise to 34% by the end of the decade.

The "middle class" households numbered 10.7 million in 2001-2; by 2009-10, they're expected to rise to 28.4 million. "The rich too are growing in numbers," points out Rakesh Shukla, senior fellow and head of the survey team, NCAER. From 0.8 million in 2001-02, they're expected to grow to 3.8 million by the end of the decade.

"While the number of crorepatis families was 5,000 in 1995-96, they increased to 20,000 in 2001-02. By the end of the decade, there'll be 1.4 lakh such households," says Shukla. Also, most of the deprived (85%) and the aspirers (60%) will be concentrated in rural areas by the end of the decade, while three-fourths of the rich and two-thirds of the middle class will be found in cities.

The report is based on extensive surveys covering three lakh households across 858 villages and 660 towns and cities all over India. It covered a list of 20 durables, seven consumables and a host of services including mediclaim, life insurance and credit cards. (TOI, N. Delhi, June 24, 2005)

Thus, on the whole, it can be concluded that with changing economic policies in India, the middle class is witnessing a metamorphosis in their consumption patterns but consumer culture is still in its nascent stage in urban India. Rather than becoming an all-pervasive phenomenon, consumption is still in terms of differences. Therefore consumerism has yet to evolve. It is quite evident that material progress is taking place, albeit at a slow pace but most importantly, it is imperative to delve into the kind of social relations those belonging to the middle class are entering into, to understand whether they are modern in the strict sense of the word.

With regards to formation of interpersonal relations, it is found that the middle class as Andre Beteille writes, is still in the process of formation and have still not acquired a stable form (Beteille, 2001:74). As such they are marked by deep and pervasive antinomies meaning contradictions, oppositions and tensions inherent in a set of norms and values.

15.6 Values Related To Family, Marriage and Women's Status Amongst the Middle Class

Even in the 21st century, marriage is considered an important traditional social institution that all are supposed to enter into. Choices available with individuals, specifically women, are very few as marriage and motherhood are taken to be the ultimate goals. A woman's identity is seen to be largely dependent on her marital status.

Marriage is still seen as a way of life through which an individual entered adulthood in both upper and upper middle classes of urban India, who outwardly appear to be modern. Although marriage is considered essential for both men and women, yet in the case of women, adherence to the social norms becomes more rigid. In the context of remaining single and unmarried, women seem to have a limited choice. In other words, men have more options as they could choose to remain single but women, by and large, do not enjoy such freedom.

Particularistic criteria continue to provide the normative basis for the formation of intimate relations among people across all classes. Although arranged marriages, whereby parents choose the prospective mates for their children are the preferred form of marriage, in the upper and upper middle classes, certain changes are observable. Semi- arranged marriages, in which individuals choose their own life partners but marry only with the consent of their parents, are also taking place. In such marriages, inter-caste and inter- religious marital alliances are being tolerated, albeit conditionally. Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian marriages are still taboo. The main reason cited for disapproval of such alliances is the higher probability of mal-adjustment between spouses because of religious differences leading to breakdown of ties. Other than these exceptional cases, a majority continue to subscribe to the traditional value system with emphasis being laid on marriages taking place within the same caste and religion. However, certain changes have occurred from previous generations as the prospective mates are allowed to meet once or twice before the finalisation of the marital unions. In the lower middle and lower classes, there is strict adherence to social norms. Wedding ceremonies are performed in a traditional way. Choices available with individuals are very few. In case of the lower middle class, such values and norms are comparatively more deep- rooted. Certain ambiguities are quite evident in the attitudes of those belonging to the middle class as they seem to be more open to change while responding to the same queries in questionnaires but adopt a more traditional viewpoint while narrating their life histories without being too conscious during in-depth interviews. Such contradictions are inherent in the set of social norms and values upheld by them.

Furthermore, the stereotypical roles of man being the 'breadwinner' and woman the 'nurturer' are perpetuated. In the upper and upper middle classes, certain changes are observable. There is 'superficial emancipation' as women are choosing clothes that are in tune with the latest in the world of fashion. Nonetheless, they do not have complete freedom to decide on matters related to their occupations and marriage. Since marriage and motherhood are considered to be the most important goals, all decisions have to be in consonance with these. Women, in the upper class, are not encouraged to be gainfully employed as that is taken to reflect a poor status of the families that they belong to. Vocations with flexible timings are subscribed to making

it convenient for them to complete their primary tasks of home management and therefore not facing any form of role conflict.

Although women in the upper and upper middle classes in the contemporary age appear to be more autonomous compared to those belonging to the previous generations, they are still considered to be appendages to men. Only in the realm of the size of the family, the former seem to have as much say as the latter. In the upper middle class, parents lay emphasis on their daughters excelling in their studies just as they would wish their sons to. However, emphasis is not laid on higher education as that is taken to be a hindrance in getting good matrimonial matches. A harmonious marital relationship is seen to be dependent on women occupying a sub-ordinate status to men.

In the lower middle class, also, women appear to have limited choices in the sphere of education. Education is considered important in order to enable them to be better wives and mothers. Significantly, most women are gainfully employed but they are compelled to join the work force to meet the economic needs of the family. Women are essentially expected to remain within the domains of their households and cater to the needs of their families. This is viewed as a natural phenomenon. Women do not have absolute freedom to decide on matters concerning selves. Thus, it is quite apparent that women in the middle class, both upper and lower are still not self-determining individuals. Social roles continue to be defined in accordance with traditional expectations.

Also, while forming friendships, particularistic norms continue to play some role as such relationships are usually based on class similarities i.e. with similar economic background and value systems.

Thus, it is quite interesting to note that in contemporary times, the middle class in India has not acquired a stable form and cannot be labeled as 'modern'.

15.7 Conclusion

At the outset, there would be a strong tendency to state that the middle class in urban India is modern, based on the fact that materialistically, there is a marked change, albeit slowly. While there is no denying the fact that consumer culture has still not taken a well-entrenched form in India, yet it must be conceded that consumption patterns of the urban Indian middle class is changing. Overt symbols such as cars, electronic goods, designer clothes are being used to portray progressive attitudes and supposedly modern status of individuals. However, to define class in terms of economic status alone will not be an adequate representation of the class situation in India. In this Unit, we have tried to bring out the fact that the basis for formation of social relations is an important criterion for understanding the middle class in India. Middle class in India cannot be defined as being completely modern. Modernisation is not just about possessing the latest electronic appliances and being technologically updated.

Rather it needs to be visible in the attitudes of people that come into effect in their social relations with others. Modernity brings in its wake new forms of social interaction. In the context of the urban middle class in India, lack of modernity is perceptible in most realms of the personal lives of people with social relations continuing to be embedded in traditional

expectations, norms and mores. Essentially, those living in this cosmopolitan city appear to be grappling with the difficult alternatives of tradition and modernity. Normative patterns and value orientations are still particularistic, ascriptive based and patriarchal. Choices in interpersonal relationships are socially controlled. Furthermore, social conditioning perpetuates reactions and thinking along expected lines that underline the predominant codes of a male dominated society. We are in no way suggesting that Indian middle class has not progressed at all. As Dipankar Gupta argues “though the past is in our present, it is not as if the past in its entirety is our present” (Gupta 2000: 206). Metamorphosis is taking place which is why people are appearing to be ambivalent in their thinking as is evident while conducting research amongst them on these aspects. Modernity brings in its wake contradictions and ambiguities in the minds of people as options available with them expand manifold. This phenomenon is being experienced by the urban middle class of India. Therefore, one can conclude that the social order is in a transitional stage with the traditional value system still being predominant in the tradition-modernity continuum.

15.8 Further Reading

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Unit 16

Gender, Caste and Class

Contents

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 What is Gender?
- 16.3 Gender and Caste
- 16.4 Gender and Class
- 16.5 Regional Variations in Gender, Caste and Class
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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- ≈ define the concept of gender;
- ≈ explain the relationship between gender and caste;
- ≈ discuss the links between gender and class; and finally
- ≈ describe briefly the regional variations in gender, caste and class.

16.1 Introduction

So far you learnt about agrarian classes and categories, the working class and the middle class in India. In this unit we will explain the third kind of social stratification based on gender. Indian society is marked by multiplicity of languages, customs and cultural practices. Within the broad social hierarchy of caste and class, gender cuts across caste and class. In contemporary India gender, caste and class are dynamic phenomena, which vary between different regions and communities.

Since the previous units have already described to you the various aspects of caste and class system of stratification, here we will focus on the dynamics of gender a system of stratification and its various dimensions in Indian society. Gender roles are determined through the interaction of several factors such as material factors, the division of labour, constraints which are imposed through the processes of socialisation within family, caste, marriage and kinship organisation, inequality in inheritance and in access to resources for maintaining health, life and livelihood. Social hierarchies that exist within the family are also expressed and are visible outside in the realms of wage work on the basis of gender, caste and class.

Some of these factors are ideological factors based on domestic ideologies, religious beliefs, rituals and customs that reinforce inequality, and lead to the internalisation of hierarchies by women themselves. Most of the material and ideological factors are very deeprooted in our society and culture, in our social institutions, which play a significant role in sustaining and reproducing women's subordination in society.

16.2 What is Gender?

Gender is perhaps the oldest and the most enduring source of social differentiation. It is one that has claimed critical address only within the last

century. Within the academia, the conceptualisation and re-conceptualisation of gender, as an idea and as a set of practices, has occurred during the last three decades, which surely reveals the deeply political character of the issue that it raises. Further, gender encompasses the social division and cultural distinctions between women and men as well as the characteristics commonly associated within femininity and masculinity. It should be remembered, however, that gender could not be abstracted from the wider social relations with which it is enmeshed, that gender intersects other social divisions and inequalities such as class, race and sexuality, and that the meanings of masculinity and femininity vary within, as well as between societies. Gender does not replace the term sex, which refers exclusively to biological difference between men and women. Gender identities are plural, divided and potentially unstable, gender always includes the dynamics of ethnicity and class. Let us see how various sociologists have discussed the concept of gender.

1) Gender and Sex

Gender refers to the socially constructed and culturally determined roles that women and men play in their daily lives. It is a conceptual tool for analysis and has been used to highlight various structural relationships of inequality between men and women as manifested in labour markets and in political structures, as well as, in the household. 'Sex' on the other hand, refers to the biological differences between male and female, which are much the same across space and time. Gender, the socially constructed differences and relations between males and females, varies greatly from place to place and from time to time. Gender can therefore be defined as a notion that offers a set of frameworks within which the social and ideological construction and representation of differences between the sexes are explained. (Masfield. A. 1991).

According to a UNESCO document titled: "The Needs of Women", the definition of gender given by the international labour organisation refers to the social differences and relations between men and woman, which are learned, which vary widely among societies and cultures and change over time. The term gender does not replace the term sex, which refers exclusively to biological difference between men and woman. The term gender is used to analyse the role, responsibilities, constraints, needs of men and women in all areas and in any given social context. Gender involves power structure and economic relationships. Gender identities are plural, divided and potentially unstable. Gender always includes the dynamics of ethnicity and class.

2) Social Construction of Gender

Social scientists like E.D. Grey (1982: 39) believe that social construction is a continuous process in which both individual, as well as, wider social processes take a part. It is the process by which 'everyday sense of things' forms the foundation of the social construction of reality. Each and every construction is influenced by the individual understanding of the social actors and therefore it has obviously a subjective bias. Social construction of reality is also shaped, by the interests of particular groups and classes in a society. In this sense too it is biased. Generally, cultural values, norms, customs, languages, ideologies and institutional frameworks of society are used to justify particular social constructions with a view to projecting the subjective bias of groups and classes as rational and to make it broad based and legitimate. Hence, social construction through which we understand our

everyday experience, make moral judgements and classify other people according to religion, sex, caste etc. are culturally determined and can be changed. They shape social norms, values, customs, beliefs etc. and are also inculcated through them. The social processes like socialisation and education also help to make a particular kind of social construction enduring and widely accepted. Gender is a product of such social construction. It is also shaped within the given cultural apparatus of a society. (Kannaviran, K. 2000 FWE-01, IGNOU)

Gender or the cultural construction of the masculine and feminine, plays a crucial role in shaping institutions and practices in every society. It is important in order to understand the system of stratification and domination in terms of caste, class, race and especially the relations of power between men and women within a culture.

Reflection and Action 16.01

Reflect upon the customs and traditions of your family. Write a description of at least one ritual or ceremony, which discriminates men from women.

What are the implications of the ritual for your family and your own status? Discuss your account with other students of your Study Centre.

16.3 Gender and Caste

In Block-2 **Perspectives on Caste** of this course, **Sociology in India** you have already learnt about the various perspectives on caste in India – how the upper castes like the Brahmins viewed it, how the colonial rulers (the Britishers and other Europeans) viewed caste in India, and how other castes lower in the caste hierarchy perceived caste. Caste as a system of social stratification is said to have subsumed class in India. In the traditional Indian society, the upper castes were generally upper class having all the resources and power, social, political and economic in their favour. The lower castes were generally landless labourers or service castes that were low in status, economically poor and politically powerless.

It was only later that this harmony was disturbed during the colonial rule in India when land became a marketable commodity. The traditional power structure was disturbed and social mobility rate increased multifold due to the colonial impact and opening up of different occupational avenues, economic betterment of middle castes and some lower castes as well, such as the Jatavs of Agra (OM Lynch 1968 in Milton Singer (ed.) 1968).

There are various theories of the origin of caste in India, such as the theory of racial origin, origin in terms of occupational specialisation etc. But none of the writings on caste has looked at it in politically conscious or gendered terms and they do not address the issues of power, dominance and hegemony as key issues in caste society throughout its history. Kalpana Kannaviran in IGNOU FWE-01, Block 1: pp. 16) writes that any analysis of caste by Indians is by definition political. It either consciously chooses or unconsciously identifies with one of the two positions:

- a) supporting the status quo by proposing a case for the concentration of power in the hands of those who already have it, or
- b) engaging critically with the status quo by developing a critique of Indian tradition.

Needless to say, the most radical critique of caste and by extension, the Indian tradition, have come from intellectuals and political activists, from Dalit groups and anti-Brahmin movements, that is, critiques that have emerged from the life experience and world views of these groups. These critiques re-centre caste firmly within the socio-political and cultural realities of those whose labour and sexuality has been traditionally mis-appropriated by the hegemonic groups in caste society, namely the dominant castes.

She believes that the single most important arena for the gendering of caste occurs in the arena of sexuality. The desire to regulate female sexuality has led to a considerable ritual preoccupation with female purity in the caste societies of Sri Lanka and India. Predictably, male sexuality is not ritualised in the same way.

Box 16.02: Low Female Male Ratio (FMR) in Uttar Pradesh

Leiten and Srivastava (1999 : 71) say that Uttar Pradesh has among the lowest Female-Male ratio (FMR) in the world, and the lowest in India, with the exception of Haryana. A closer look at the regional dissimilarities shows that the 'epicentre' of the problem of low FMR is not in Haryana but in western Uttar Pradesh. This region has more than one third of the population of the entire state and nearly three times the population of Haryana. Also, this region has the lowest FMR of only 0.84.

I) Construction of Gender and Rituals

As is well known, rituals reveal a lot about the gender construction in a particular society. Amongst the Kandyan Singhalese, Yalman (1963) highlights two important ceremonies.

- i) The most important ritual for Kandyan Children, which is gender differentiated is the ear piercing ceremony for girls before they attain puberty.
- ii) The second and by far the most significant ritual is the one that marks the onset of male puberty.

Here, as well as in many caste communities of the South of India, there are specific rituals which are performed when a girl begins to menstruate. The rites of passage marking her entry into adulthood is publicly celebrated and rituals are performed. During the period of menstruation she is confined into a hut or a closed room so that she does not pollute others nor does harm come to her. The segregation is partly to protect her from hostile powers and demons that are attracted to her at this time. Elaborate rituals surround the girl's purification after her first period. (Yalman, N. 1963 : 25)

What is the need for only girls to go through these rituals? As believed by the villagers themselves amongst the Singhalese, Yalman reports, these rituals relate as much to female fertility as to more honour. The villagers say that:

- i) It protects the fecundity of the womb of the woman and
- ii) "This is necessary since the honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through their women".

II) Caste and Regulation of Sexuality and Reproduction

Thus, it is very clear that caste and gender are closely related since the question of sexuality of women is directly linked with the purity of the race,

honour of the men. Therefore, the higher the caste, the more controlled would be the sexuality of their women. In caste societies, such as, Sri Lanka and India, more so in the upper castes than the lower castes, elaborate institutions of hypergamy – where women can cohabit only with men of their own caste or of a superior caste is practised. They cannot marry a man who is lower in caste status than their own. Kannaviran (2000 : 17) says that women as seen through the lens of the dominant castes are mere receptacles for the male seed. The purity of the receptacle (here, women's womb) then ensures the purity of the offspring and sets to rest doubts about paternity. As said earlier, the control and concern over female sexuality are greatest in the castes which have the highest stakes in the material assets of society i.e. the upper castes and classes.

The concern with marriage networks, endogamy and exogamy being crucial to the maintenance of the caste system where men regulate the system through the exchange of or control over women is central to any discussion on caste. The customary right of male family members to exchange female members in marriage, according to Lerner, antedated the development of the patriarchy and created the conditions for the development of the family. In India, the customary right acquired a further economic significance with the development of private property and caste stratification. The primary consideration in the forming of marriage alliances was and still is, the maximising of family fortunes. Women play a crucial economic role not only by providing free domestic labour, but also through their reproductive services. Lerner argues that it was the sexual and reproductive services of women that were cared under patriarchy, not women themselves. (Lerner, G. 1986 quoted in IGNOU 2000 FWE-01, Block 1)

The commodification of women in the marriage market in patriarchal, patrilineal caste society goes hand in hand with prescriptions for women's behaviour and restrictions on their mobility, the dispossession of women in property and inheritance matters, and their absence in local level political and decision making bodies. The entire complex constituting the construction of gender in caste society is a construction that radically devalues the status of women in these societies (Kannaviran, K. 2000 : 17)

III) Changing Caste System and its Impact on Women

In contemporary India, many constraints on women due to their caste identity have been greatly reduced. In capitalist India, several new social classes have emerged. However, this does not mean that the age-old subordination of women has disappeared. The emergence of new classes has meant control of women in new and different forms from those under the caste system. Let us examine some of the issues related with gender and class in the next section.

16.4 Gender and Class

In order to understand women's status in traditional as well as contemporary Indian society it is imperative to understand the class concept in determining the status of women in society. Many scholars consider caste and class as polar opposites. According to them caste and class are different forms of social stratification. The units ranked in the class system are individuals, and those ranked in the caste system are groups. Therefore, change takes place from caste to class, hierarchy to stratification, closed to open and from organic to segmentary system. In reality both caste and class are real and

empirical and both interactional and hierarchical, in fact, both incorporate each other. (Kaur, Kuldeep 2000 : 34, WED-01, Block-3, IGNOU)

The caste and class nexus is highlighted by Kathleen Gough in her analysis of the mode of production as a social formation in which she finds connections between caste, kinship, family and marriage on the one hand and forces of production and productive relations on the other. Class relationships are taken as the main assumptions in the treatment of caste and kinship in India. Some scholars have even explained the Varna and Jajmani system (about which you learnt in Block-4 **Perspectives on Caste**) in terms of class relations and the mode of production. Therefore, we can say that caste incorporates class, class incorporates caste. (Gough, 1980 quoted in IGNOU: WED-01, Block-3)

The caste-class nexus is related with the status of working women in urban and rural India. Andre Beteille in his book “Six Essays in Comparative Sociology” has highlighted this aspect. He asks the relevant question – How are we to view families in which men work in the fields but women are by custom debarred from such work? This is quite prevalent among the families of the upper castes. Even among some families of the intermediate and lower castes who have become economically well off have adopted this norm with a view to elevate their social status in the village community. But it does not mean that this position leads to equal treatment being meted out to women. Withdrawal from work only results in elevation of family status. But as explained by Beteille (1974) this also arises from caste to caste, and also depends upon the economic and social standing of particular families.

Box 16.03: “Sanskritisation” of Lower Castes in Uttar Pradesh

The negative aspect of ‘Sanskritisation’ (i.e. adopting the norms and values and style of life of the upper castes by the lower castes to gain higher social status) seems to be the fall-out of general upward economic mobility. However, “this economic mobility leads to the ‘domestication’ of women and a fall in their status and value”. (Dreze & Sen A. 1995 : 158)

Andre Beteille also comments upon the process of change in the status of women in the context of manual labour. He points out how women are first withdrawn from the family farm. Finally, with economic mobility, the men, too, either withdraw from work, or change their role from cultivator to supervisor. Therefore withdrawing womenfolk from manual labour on farms is a symbol of high social status in the countryside. Due to variation in life styles, the caste duties differ from one caste to another or one class to another. But inspite of the differences of caste backgrounds, the status of women across castes does not differ in comparison with men. So far as the ideology of the ‘Pativrata’ is concerned, which directs women to maintain male authority in all castes, applies to women of all castes and class. (Kaur, Kuldeep 2000 : 35 quoted in IGNOU 2000 : WED, Block-3)

New Social Classes and Status of Women

A study of classes in India shows that it is a very complex phenomena. Infact, the rise of new classes among different communities is an uneven phenomena. During, the British period, Indian society was exposed to certain new forces as mentioned earlier e.g. the Western system of education, the new land settlements and the provision of new transport facilities such as the railways. This phenomena led to a lot of changes in the caste/class

relationships. In rural India there emerged a new class especially in Bengal Presidency called the Zamindars. Under the new settlement the right of ownership was conferred on the Zamindars. According to the new settlement, failure on the part of some Zamindars to pay the fixed revenue led to the auction of portions of large estates. This in turn, led to the entry of new classes of landlords who were primarily the merchants and money lenders. Besides the zamindars, the peasants formed an important social class in rural India. The peasantry in India is not a homogeneous category. It consists of (i) the rich class, (ii) the middle class and (iii) the poor peasants. Along with the peasantry the artisan class also formed an important part of the village community. The artisans mainly consisted of carpenters (Badhai), the ironsmith (Lohar), the potter (Kumhar), and the goldsmith (Sonar).

Within the above mentioned classes the status of women has varied. Among the above classes women generally occupied a secondary place – interestingly, this phenomenon continues to exist in contemporary times. Given below are some tables that portray the status of women among different economic classes.

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of Female Main Workers by
Industrial Category in India, 1981 and 1991

Industrial Category	1981			1991		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Cultivators	33.09	36.04	4.63	34.22	38.53	5.13
Agricultural Labourers	46.34	50.36	16.65	44.93	49.32	15.61
Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantations and Allied Activities	1.83	1.84	1.77	1.60	1.61	1.52
Mining & Quarrying	0.35	0.31	0.69	0.34	0.29	0.68
Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing & Repairs						
a) Household Industry	4.57	3.77	10.44	3.53	2.93	7.53
b) Other than Household Industry	3.60	2.11	14.59	3.88	2.34	14.14
Construction	0.87	0.56	3.10	0.66	0.27	3.30
Trade and Commerce	2.04	1.12	8.92	2.26	1.10	10.01
Transport, Storage & Communications	0.37	0.11	2.24	0.32	0.08	1.94
Other Services	6.94	2.88	36.97	8.26	3.48	40.14

Source: Census of India, 1991, Final Population Totals, series-I, India, Paper 2 of 1992, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi] 1993.

The above table clearly depicts that the percentage of female workers in the industrial category has increased over the years. The percentage of women cultivators and agricultural labourers has not only increased but is the largest sector that employs women.

Table 2
Women in the Organised Sector
(In lakhs)

	Public Sector		Private Sector		Total	
Year	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1971	98.7 (92.0)	8.6 (8.6)	56.8 (84.0)	10.8 (16.0)	155.6 (89.0)	19.3 (11.0)
1981	139.8 (90.3)	14.9 (9.7)	61.0 (82.5)	12.9 (17.5)	200.5 (87.8)	27.93 (12.2)
1991	167.1 (87.7)	23.4 (12.3)	62.4 (81.3)	14.3 (18.7)	229.5 (85.9)	37.81 (14.1)
1993	168.4	24.7	63.0	15.5	231.4	40.27

Source: DGE and T, Ministry of Labour, Government of India, New Delhi.

The above table portrays that women are largely employed in private sector enterprise.

The state wise break up is given in table (3)

Table 3
Table Employment Statistics, 1991

India/State	Employment of Women (in thousands) as on 31.3.99		
	Public Sector	Private Sector	Total
India	2810.7	2018.4	4829.2
1. Andhra Pradesh	216.3	183.0	399.3
2. Arunachal Pradesh	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
3. Assam	73.2	238.9	312.1
4. Bihar	90.1	17.4	107.5
5. Chhattisgarh	-	%	%
6. Delhi	90.7	29.3	120.1
7. Goa	14.9	7.4	22.3
8. Gujarat	144.7	78.1	222.8
9. Haryana	63.4	24.5	87.9
10. Himachal Pradesh	38.8	5.7	44.5
11. Jammu & Kashmir	20.7	1.9	22.6
12. Jharkhand	%	%	%
13. Karnataka	234.6	310.5	545.1
14. Kerala	191.5	275.2	466.7
15. Madhya Pradesh	162.5	26.7	189.3
16. Maharashtra	350.6	207.8	558.4
17. Manipur	17.4	0.8	18.2
18. Meghalaya	14.6	4.3	18.9

19. Mizoram	10.4	0.6	11.0
20. Nagaland	1.6	1.1	12.7
21. Orissa	83.9	10.9	94.8
22. Punjab	100.7	31.1	131.8
23. Rajasthan	129.6	42.0	171.5
24. Sikkim	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
25. Tamil Nadu	414.0	325.7	739.8
26. Tripura	17.5	4.7	22.1
27. Uttar Pradesh	184.9	54.4	239.3
28. Uttaranchal	%	%	%
29. West Bengal	111.7	128.8	240.4
30. Andaman & Nicobar Island	3.1	0.1	3.3
31. Chandigarh	12.4	4.7	17.1
32. Dadra & Nagar Haveli	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
33. Daman & Diu	0.2	1.4	1.6
34. Lakshadweep	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
35. Pondicherry	6.6	1.5	8.1

Source: India, Ministry of Labour, DGET Employment Review January-March 1999, p. 23.

It is significant to note that the above table depicts that the status of women has fluctuated in different economic sectors. However in the North-East region especially among the Khasis and the Gharos the status of women is high both economically and socially. Among the Khasis in Meghalaya the ancestral property is inherited by females. One of the distinguishing feature of the Khasi family structure is that women hold property. Infact, they are the hub of the economy, and the youngest daughter performs all the religious rites, yet the outside world is dominated by men. They have a saying “war and politics for men, property and children for women” (Tiplut Nongbri 1994).

Reflection and Action 16.02

Recount a short incidence about your experience regarding the status of women in a patriarchal family system or a matriarchal set-up. Write a short note of about a page. Compare it, if possible, with other students at your Study Centre.

16.5 Regional Variations in Gender, Caste and Class

As stated earlier, gender class and caste relationships are highly complex and dynamic phenomena. In a patriarchal family system which exists in the northern belt of India and among Brahmins, Thakurs, Kayasthas and Banias the womenfolk occupy a secondary place in the family. In such families power is wielded by the eldest male members or other males in the family. Prevalent customs like child marriage, enforced widowhood, sati purdah etc. purdah have had an adverse impact on the status of women. The above mentioned customs, along with socialisation practice have led to the girls/

women occupying a subordinate position in the family. Further, women's education in such families is not valued. Field studies have shown that violence in patriarchal families have been reported to be higher. According to Vina Mazumdar, "we remember that this region (India) had thrown up some of the most powerful women rulers in the world, but they did not work for restructuring of the social order, eliminating patriarchal institutions. We have taken pride in their successful defence of national sovereignty and leadership role in defending third world interest in global fora. But as prisoners of power in hierarchical global and national social order, they could not be creators or defenders of democracy from below. Nor could they even begin the task of eliminating the subordination of women in the masses."

Leela Dube also states in her work – "Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South East Asia" that it is a peculiarity of South Asia that the female sex is denied the right to be born, to survive after birth, and to live a healthy life avoiding the risks of pregnancy and childbirth. The under valuing of women across different castes, classes and even regions has had an impact on the educational status of women as well as their ratio in the total population of India. Given below are tables depicting the literacy rate, as well as sex ratio of women in India. These are self-explanatory where status of women in India is concerned.

Table 4
Literate and Literacy Rates by Sex : 2001

S.No.	India/State/Union Territory*	Literacy rate #		
		Person	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5
	India	6538	7585	5416
01	Jammu & Kashmir	5446	6575	4182
02	Himachal Pradesh	7713	8602	6808
03	Punjab	6995	7563	6355
04	Chandigarh*	8176	8565	7665
05	Uttaranchal	7228	8401	6026
06	Haryana	6859	7925	5631
07	Delhi*	8182	8737	7500
08	Rajasthan	6103	7646	4434
09	Uttar Pradesh	5736	7023	4298
10	Bihar	4753	6032	3357
11	Sikkim	6968	7673	6146
12	Arunachal Pradesh	5474	6407	4424
13	Nagaland	6711	7177	6192
14	Manipur	6887	7787	5970
15	Mizoram	8849	9069	8613
16	Tripura	7366	8147	6541
17	Meghalaya	6331	6614	6041
18	Assam	6428	7193	5603
19	West Bengal	6922	7758	6022

20	Jharkhand	5413	6794	3938
21	Orissa	6361	7595	5097
22	Chhattisgarh	6518	7786	5240
23	Madhya Pradesh	6411	7680	5028
24	Gujarat*	6997	8050	5860
25	Daman & Diu*	8109	8840	7037
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli*	6003	7332	4299
27	Maharashtra	7727	8627	6751
28	Andhra Pradesh	6111	7085	5117
29	Karnataka	6704	7629	5745
30	Goa	8232	8888	7557
31	Lakshadweep*	8752	8315	8156
32	Kerala	9092	9420	8786
33	Tamil Nadu	7374	8233	6455
34	Pondicherry*	8149	8889	7413
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands*	8118	8607	7529

Table 5
Population and Sex-Ratio

S.No.	India/State/Union Territory*	Literacy rate #			
		Person	Males	Females	Sex ratio (females per 1,000 males)
1	2	3	4	5	6
	India	1027015247	531277078	495738169	933
01	Jammu & Kashmir	10069917	5300574	4769343	900
02	Himachal Pradesh	6077248	3085256	2991992	970
03	Punjab	24289296	12963362	11325934	874
04	Chandigarh*	900914	508224	392690	773
05	Uttaranchal	8479562	4316401	4163161	964
06	Haryana	21082989	11327658	9755331	861
07	Delhi*	13782976	7570890	6212086	821
08	Rajasthan	56473122	29381657	27091465	922
09	Uttar Pradesh	166052859	87466301	78586558	898
10	Bihar	82878796	43153964	39724832	921
11	Sikkim	540493	288217	252276	875
12	Arunachal Pradesh	1091117	573951	517166	901
13	Nagaland	1988636	1041686	946950	909
14	Manipur	2388634	1207338	1181296	978
15	Mizoram	891058	459783	431275	938

16	Tripura	3191168	1636138	1555030	950
17	Meghalaya	2306069	1167840	1138229	975
18	Assam	26638407	13787799	12850608	932
19	West Bengal	80221171	41487694	38733477	934
20	Jharkhand	26909428	13861277	13048151	941
21	Orissa	36706920	18612340	18094580	972
22	Chhattisgarh	20795956	10452426	10343530	990
23	Madhya Pradesh	60385118	31456873	28928245	920
24	Gujarat*	50596992	26344053	24252939	921
25	Daman & Diu*	158059	92478	65581	709
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli*	220451	121731	98720	811
27	Maharashtra	96752247	50334270	46417977	922
28	Andhra Pradesh	75727541	38286811	37440730	978
29	Karnataka	52733958	26856343	25877615	964
30	Goa	1343998	685617	658381	960
31	Lakshadweep*	60595	31118	29477	947
32	Kerala	31838619	15468664	26369955	1058
33	Tamil Nadu	62110829	31268654	30842185	986
34	Pondicherry*	973829	486705	487124	1001
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands*	356265	192985	163280	846

16.6 Conclusion

In this unit an attempt has been made to examine the close relationship between gender, caste and class in the Indian context. An in-depth definition of gender, caste and class is also stated. An analysis of the position of women within the different castes in India has been described. The relationship between caste and class in the context of gender has been explained. Further, an attempt has been made to discuss the participation of women in different sectors of the economy such as the public and private sectors through tables. Finally the regional variation of status of women in patriarchal and matriarchal families is discussed. The table mentioning the literacy rate and sex ratio of women state-wise highlighting the regional variations is also given.

16.7 Further Reading

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Glossary

Sociography	: It refers to descriptive studies of both a qualitative and a quantitative kind. It was used first by Ferdinand Tonnies who placed great emphasis on the use of statistics. For him sociography means descriptive sociological studies using statistics.
Suzerainty	: The right of a country to rule over another country.
Empirical	: Any field of study, which may or may not have an explicit theory, is seen as a different order of inquiry from that which either (a) sets out a conceptual language for analysing social relations or (b) outlines a theory or explanation of some aspect of social life without testing its truth or falsity. (Mitchel, Dumcan G. 1968 : 65)
Conservatives	: Those scholars and thinkers who resisted change from the traditional order.
Utilitarian rationalism	: Its a philosophical outlook associated with the name of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) in whose thought, ethics and psychology rest on the fundamental fact that pleasure is better than pain. Utility is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The maximisation of utility is the proper end of humankind. (I vid 1968)
Pragmatic	: Solving problems in a practical and sensible way rather than by having fixed ideas or theories.
Demographic	: The changes in the number of births, deaths, diseases etc. in a population over a period of time.
Structural	: Anything related with the network of social relationships in a society, which are institutionalised.
Ideological	: A set of beliefs and ideas, especially one held by a particular group of people that influences their behaviour.
Field-View	: View of social scientists based on first-hand observation or field work of the area of study. It refers to the way a system, for eg. caste system, functions in reality in different communities in India.
Decolonisation	: It is the process of the colony such as India becoming independent.
Differentiated	: When each part takes up a different function or specialisation in a society.
Mechanisation	: Technological advance when dependence on manual labour shifts to the use of machines.

Modernisation	: The process of becoming more modern or contemporary. It applies to the use of technology, changes in values, beliefs and ideas etc.
Patronage	: The institution of giving protection to the lower castes, in terms of cash and kind and receiving services from them in lieu of it by the upper castes or the relationship between lords and peasants.
Loyalty	: Refers to the obligation that the peasants or the lower castes felt for the Lord or the upper caste landowner who gave them protection.
Affinity	: Relationship by marriage is described as 'affinity'.
Agnate	: Related through male descent or on the father's side.
Alliance	: In the context of kinship studies, the bond between two families following a marriage is described as relationship of 'alliance'.
Clan	: A group united through a belief that they have a common ancestor, is called a clan. In the context of Indian society, subcaste sharing a common <i>gotra</i> is called a clan.
Consanguinity	: It refers to the state of being related by blood. All blood relatives of a person are his/her consanguine.
Descent	: Derivation from an ancestor is called descent. There are various ways of derivation and hence different systems of descent are found in human societies.
Endogamy	: When marriage is specifically required within a group, this specification is called the rule of endogamy.
Exogamy	: When marriage is specifically required outside a group, this specification is called the rule of exogamy.
Hypergamy	: When marriage is specifically required in an equal or higher social group or subcaste, this specification is called the rule of hypergamy.
Neolocal	: This term refers to residence after marriage. In this type of residence, the husband and the wife set up an independent household.
Patrilocal	: In this type of residence, after marriage, the married couple lives with the husband's father's family.

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Unit 17

Tribe, Territory and Common Property Resources

Contents

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Early history
- 17.3 Mixed economy and the commons in India
- 17.4 Population growth and impossibility of commons?
- 17.5 Culture of the commons
- 17.6 Conclusion
- 17.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After going through this Unit, you will be able to know:

- Historical development of the concept of 'commons';
- Relationship of 'commons' and mixed economy in India;
- Population growth and 'commons'; and
- Culture of 'commons'.

17.1 Introduction

The notions of territory and common property resources are very closely associated with the notion of tribe. In fact, one cannot imagine of tribes, at least in classical sense, without being identified with territories that have sustained them from time immemorial. Tribes are also known for practising 'common property resources', which among others, provides livelihood and binds them socially and emotionally. Thus, we see the notions of 'commons' (also known as 'common property resources') and tribes as inextricably linked with each other. In fact, 'commons' is one of the significant features in the lives of tribals. Therefore, we shall understand the concept of 'commons' and related aspects with special reference to tribes in India.

But what does 'commons' mean? The 'commons' is not easy to define- it is neither private property nor public property: neither is it a commercial farm nor a communist collective, nor a business firm nor a state utility, nor a jealously guarded private plot nor national or city park. The accepted understanding is that the '*commons*' is *natural resource shared by the local community that decides who uses it and how*. Our concern here is with understanding the principles that defines and determines the use of the commons with special reference to tribes in India.

17.2 Early History

The Romans distinguished between three types of property: *res privatae*- things capable of being possessed by an individual or family, *res publicae* - things built and set aside for public use by the state, such as public buildings and roads and *res communes*- natural things used by all, such as air, water and wild animals. This was codified in the Institutes of Justinian, the grand summation of Roman law, which said: "By the law of nature these things are common to mankind — the air, running water, the sea, and consequently the shore of the sea."

During the Middle Ages in the United Kingdom, the commons were shared lands used by villagers for foraging, hunting, planting crops and harvesting wood. In 1215, the Magna Carta established forests and fisheries as *res communes*, resources available to all. Several states declared in their constitutions that natural resources belong to the people and that the government acts as the people's trustee. In this understanding, commons is defined with respect to community.¹

Beginning with the industrial revolution in 18th century when labor became a commodity and enclosure were put around land to demarcate the commons, the notion of community changed. This was the earliest form of privatization, first by the landed gentry and gradually by industrial corporations and subsequently by the two together. This alliance promoted the development through the open competitive market. Parallel to this there evolved another path of development under the patronage of the State.

These regimes differed in the way they regulated access. These worked differently in different parts of the world. Our concern is here with India.

17.3 Mixed Economy and the Commons in India

India took the path of the mixed economy-there was the private sector and public sector. In India the colonial state recklessly used natural resources uprooting a large number of local communities especially the tribal forest dwellers. After India became independent the state and private sector continued to recklessly use natural resources. This was justified for industrial development. Several tribal and peasant movements protested.

However, in the sixties when the recklessness began to undermine the natural resource base for industry the state changed its policy. On the one hand enclosures were made of 'reserves of nature' such as wild life sanctuaries, national parks and biosphere reserves. These were designed primarily to conserve biodiversity for industrial production. Further, the state allowed natural resource mining as well. On the other hand community rights such as *nistari* rights (for subsistence use) over some natural resources were recognised in some of these reserves. This resulted in the displacement of several millions of people, without being adequately and appropriately compensated. Several local communities suffered because the resource base for their livelihoods was taken away from them.

Research showed that a large number of these communities were deprived of their commons. For instance, N S Jodha has pointed out that common property resources have been degraded and their productivity is much lower today than in the past. Consequently, the rural rich depend very little on them. It is not worthwhile for them to collect and use meager quantities of products from these resources. On the other hand, the rural poor (small farmers and landless labourers) with limited alternatives increasingly depend on low pay-off options offered by such resources. In the villages studied by Jodha, 84 to 100 percent of the rural poor depended on common property resources for fuel, fodder and food; the corresponding proportion of rich farmers did not exceed 20 percent (except in very dry villages of Rajasthan); and intermediate categories of farm households depended on these resources more than the rich.²

Madhu Sarin pointed out that "The impoverishment and alienation of forest-dependent villagers resulted in widespread forest destruction and state forest departments being in perpetual conflict with forest communities. In fact, it was the acceptance of the states' inability to control access by impoverished and alienated forest dwellers to state-owned forests that culminated in the birth of Joint Forest Management. State forests account for 23 percent of

India's land area and represent the country's largest land-based common property resource. Joint Forest Management has a particular significance for the majority of the country's 54 million tribal people and other disadvantaged forest communities, particularly women, as they continue to depend primarily on forests for their livelihood and subsistence needs."³

The 73rd amendment seemed to be a turning point. It enabled the local communities to manage their common resources according to their tradition. Through this measure the state gave legitimacy to community's responses to the scarcities and stresses created by market driven and state sponsored development- namely a rapid decline in their area and productivity. Common property resources constitute an important component of community assets in different ecological areas of India (and other developing countries) and are one of them. They are sources of a range of physical products; offer employment and income generation opportunities and broader social and ecological benefits.

These measures were taken to ensure efficient use of resources for industrial production of goods, facilitate capital accumulation, ensure cheap labor and protect community rights whenever possible. Commons were defined as common property resources. These included fisheries, wild life, surface and ground water, ranges and forests. The use of these resources was a function of 'excludability' and 'subtractability'. Excludability refers to the fact that controlling access over the physical nature of the resource by potential users may be costly and in the extreme, virtually impossible. This explains the second aspect; In this case, the user is capable of subtracting from the welfare of the others.

This process of industrial development (which was a combination of the private and the public sectors) accelerated on account of globalization. This is, as it has been argued, was necessary to cope with the needs and demands of a growing population. The result of this development was to the contrary; it impoverished those who lost access to the commons and enriched those who take possession of it. In other words, it colonized the commons. This is an instance of 'excludability' and 'subtractability'.

Box: 17.1: Industrial growth and 'commons'

As population grew exponentially industrial production diversified and intensified replacing the natural component in the products with a quantum of human labor. In the process it colonized along with the non-human nature in the external world, three gifts of nature that make us human beings, namely mind, body and spirit. This process of colonization developed nuclear-military operations to ensure control over commons- natural resources. On the one hand as nuclear military power increased, national security steadily decreased. On the one hand as population increased the carrying capacity of earth decreased.

Population growth and speedy heavy industrial development determined the progressive degeneration of the commons. From being available to a few, there has arisen a situation where they are gradually becoming inaccessible to all because not only have they depleted; they have also lost the capacity to regenerate. All the realms of nature defined by the five elements of nature- earth, air, water, fire and space are getting lost irrecoverably.

There are natural things such as air and water that are needed by all. These were polluted by the industrial world and other groups of people not engaged in the polluting production processes suffered the consequences of this pollution. This led to the commodity packaging air and water. That is to say what once belonged to many now belongs to just a few.

This entire process extracted resources from nature at a rate several times faster than the rate at which nature can regenerate itself. Nature here includes

not only natural resources in the external world but also of nature internal to human beings. This contributed to the diminishing nature's capacity for recovery and regeneration. This manifest itself in the 'acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome' (AIDS) at various levels-there were AIDS patients, the susceptibility to illnesses increases and inner resources to deal with the demands of a sped-up production process depleted. In other words, our vulnerability increased-the food we eat was either not clean, or, it was low in nutrients. It started to affect our gene code. Our food security was gradually being undermined, not only because of the insufficiency of food grain production,⁴ but also because the quality of food that was available was not appropriate for sustainable health.

17.4 Population Growth and Impossibility of Commons?

Garrett Hardin (1968) in his 'The Tragedy of the Commons'⁵ discusses the impossibility of sustaining commons under conditions of rapid population growth. The main points of his argument are summarized here. I quote relevant passages from Hardin's text.

"The tragedy⁶ of the commons develops in this way. Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching, and disease keep the numbers of both man and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land. Finally, however, comes the day of reckoning, that is, the day when the long-desired goal of social stability becomes a reality. At this point, the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy. As a rational being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, 'What is the utility to me of adding one more animal to my herd?'"

"This utility has one negative and one positive component.

- 1) The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive utility is nearly + 1.
- 2) The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animals.

Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision making herdsman is only a fraction of - 1."

"Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit — in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all."

"The National Parks present an instance of the working out of this tragedy of the commons. The parks themselves are limited in extent. , Whereas population seems to grow without limits. The values that visitors seek in the parks are steadily eroded. Plainly, we must soon cease to treat the parks as commons or they will be of no value to anyone."

"In a reverse way, the tragedy of the commons reappears in problems of pollution. Here it is not a question of taking something out of the

commons, but of putting something in — sewage, or chemical, radioactive, and heat wastes into water; noxious and dangerous fumes into the air; and distracting and unpleasant advertising signs into the line of sight. The calculations of utility are much the same as before. The rational man finds that his share of the cost of the wastes he discharges into the commons is less than the cost of purifying his wastes before releasing them. Since this is true for everyone, we are locked into a system of “fouling our own nest,” so long as we behave only as independent, rational, free enterprisers.”

“The tragedy of the commons as a food basket is averted by private property, or something formally like it. But the air and waters surrounding us cannot readily be fenced, and so the tragedy of the commons as a cesspool must be prevented by different means, by coercive laws or taxing devices that make it cheaper for the polluter to treat his pollutants than to discharge them untreated. We have not progressed as far with the solution of this problem as we have with the first. Indeed, our particular concept of private property, which deters us from exhausting the positive resources of the earth, favors pollution. The owner of a factory on the bank of a stream — whose property extends to the middle of the stream — often has difficulty seeing why it is not his natural right to muddy the waters flowing past his door. The law, always behind the times, requires elaborate stitching and fitting to adapt it to this newly perceived aspect of the commons.”

17.01 Action and Reflection

Bring out the argument of Garrett Hardin on unsustainability of ‘commons’ under the conditions of rapid population growth.

At a very basic level, given that air and water are fluid all human beings can be expected to suffer pollution, some more and some less depending on one’s life situation-time and place of residence, wealth and means to either deal with problems that arise from pollution. Similarly loss of forest cover, extinction of several plant and animal species is likely to affect different groups of people differently- they may result in disasters (both man made and natural) such as floods, earthquakes, illness and diseases...etc.

There is another side to this phenomenon namely; more often than not those who suffer are not responsible for the problem (they have no control over access). In principle everyone has a right to life and for this reason to air and water cannot be owned or rather no one should be denied air and water. It is no solution to bottle clean mineral water or create oxygen cubicles for these can be used by those few who can pay for it and the rest have no access to clean air and water and have to depend on medications to deal with their sufferings. Efforts are also being made to create environmentally friendly technology as well and also formulating disincentives for polluters and incentives for non-polluters. This does not solve the problem because these measures cannot be universalized and their benefit cannot be shared by all of human kind.

It is clear that the right to commons is not confined only to community rights over property to ensure livelihood for the poor. More than this it is concerned with protection and sustainable use of natural resources for the good of all. In other words, those who have control over access have to understand that the consequences of misuse can extend to those who have no access (these people may be in the vicinity of the resource or they may be placed at some distance from it).

If we accept the goal to be “the greatest good for the greatest number” as Bentham said, then it is clear that this could not be achieved in the free market economy as Adam Smith had suggested in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) that an individual who “intends only his own gain,” is, as it were, “led by an invisible hand to promote...the public interest.” According to Hardin ‘Adam Smith did not assert that this was invariably true, and perhaps neither did any of his followers. But he contributed to a dominant tendency of thought that has ever since interfered with positive action based on rational analysis, namely, the tendency to assume that decisions reached individually will, in fact, be the best decisions for an entire society. If this assumption is correct it justifies the continuance of our present policy of *laissez faire* in reproduction. If it is correct we can assume that men will control their individual fecundity so as to produce the optimum population. If the assumption is not correct, we need to reexamine our individual freedoms to see which ones are defensible’. Hardin argues, “The evils of overpopulation cannot be overcome either with technological solutions or without relinquishing the privileges the industrial system provides. For instance, farming the seas or developing new strains of wheat will not solve the problem. Further, maximizing population does not maximize goods.”

Can the state then ensure ‘greatest good for the greatest number’? We have seen that the state has become the primary promoter of violence especially when it concerns natural resources. The State waged wars and has created conditions of terror: we are very familiar with displacements on account of construction of large reserves of nature, large dams, industries, military stations, roads, etc. In these and other similar cases the state perpetrates in the name of public interest, which refers to larger common good for the population within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. These terms (public interest and common good) are defined as national security and increases industrial production.

Thus neither the state nor the market alone can ensure the greatest good for the greatest number. This is because they both hold monopolies over natural resources. They bring many benefits with a runaway engine that has no internal regulator to tell it when to stop depleting the commons that sustains it. They in fact compete over natural resources and they differ in the way they design options for the poor who in fact lose control over natural resources and thus are without any livelihood-the state and the market can offer only jobs which are very difficult to generate. With the idea of creating more livelihood opportunities for the poor especially in non-urban settings, the notion of community-based commons was instituted.

Hardin concludes:

“... The commons, if justifiable at all, is justified only under conditions of low-population density. As the human population has increased, the commons has had to be abandoned in one aspect after another... The freedom of breeding will ruin to all... The only way we can preserve and nurture other and more precious freedoms is by relinquishing the freedom to breed, and that very soon... Only so, can we put an end to this aspect of the tragedy of the commons.”⁷

Box: 17.2: Subsets of problems on man

There has developed in the contemporary natural sciences recognition that there is a subset of problems, such as population, atomic war, and environmental corruption, for which there are no technical solutions. There is also an increasing recognition among contemporary social scientists that there is a subset of problems, such as population, atomic war, environmental corruption, and the recovery of a livable urban environment, for which there are no current political solutions. These two subsets contain most of the critical problems that threaten the very existence of contemporary man.⁸

The relinquishing of the freedom to breed is meaningful only in a limited sense namely to exercise restraint on reproduction. It cannot be interpreted in an absolute sense because this would be tantamount to annihilation not only of the reproductive processes but also of the deeper sense of sociality that defines our sense of being in the world with a future. The recognition of the impossibility of a technical solution suggests that perhaps we should try to formulate the problem in a different way that is, with different terms of reference.

For instance, we should consider that the natural world, which is an expression of the work of nature, is meant to be shared because it is not the product of any one's labor. Further, that sharing is not possible without determining what one's share is and how it can be used for the production and reproduction of goods. For this purpose natural resources are defined as 'property' by law and custom⁹. In other words, what is it that can be shared?

'Greatest good for the greatest number' defines the modern industrial system and is in turn defined by it. This objective is unattainable because the industrial systems, structures and processes of production and reproduction need a large population of cheap labor to sustain itself. Furthermore, greatest good cannot be standardized. What is greatest for one may be the lowliest for the other. To attain this goal, thus, requires standardizing, which is again impossible because it will undermine the freedom of which it is an expression. It then becomes a fetish. There is no technical solution to fetishism.

17.5 Culture of the Commons

A sense of sharing and exchange is implicit-something that is shared is common. One way of sharing is by means of exchange and the other way is to be part of a similar circumstance. Different communities have defined this relation from the standpoint of their respective cultural world-views.

Shifting cultivation is sustainable because it defines relations to land and forest in terms of individual rights and collective responsibility. Briefly, shifting cultivation is a system of clearing patches of forest in succession for husbanding crops and then leaving the clearing fallow for forest regeneration. In the best example of the system any family will move from one clearing to another once in two years, over at least twenty four clearings. The internal logic of the system is that a clearing is husbanded for one year and fallow for forty-eight years. In these forty-eight years the clearing is re-forested. It is important to note that at any point in time different clearing are at different stages of regeneration. The family or the group of people (could be from different families) have a right to their produce depending on the amount of work they have done. When a clearing is left fallow then it becomes the commons from where firewood, roots and other forest produce can be taken by members of the group. This system allows for regeneration time. One reason why the clearing in fallow becomes the commons is because the recovery of the forest is a collective responsibility. In other words there is no right over land. There is only right to use the product of labor and along with it there is the obligation to restrict use of the commons to forest produce, and allow for regeneration.

The worldview underlying this system amongst the Koitors of Abujhmarh in Bastar, Chattisgarh, is that the forest belongs to Talurmuttee (mother earth). The territorial boundary of a settlement is in fact the same as the area over which a particular Talurmuttee has jurisdiction. That is to say, without Talurmuttee's consent it is not possible to make a clearing for settlement. The Koitors observe that whenever this is not done there is no peace in the settlement-people fall ill, there is crop failure and animals from the forest such as the tiger and the cobra enter the settlement and disturb everyday life. Furthermore, a settled social life can be sustained by continuously fulfilling

one's obligation to Talurmuttee. This entails making offerings before beginning a new cultivation cycle and before eating the new harvest of crops and fruits like mango, tamarind. Any disturbance in the relation with Talurmuttee results in disturbance in social life.

The institution of the kaser gayata maintains this relation. There is person from a particular clan who is known as the kaser gayata. He is a caretaker on behalf of the settlement and Talurmuttee. He knows the sacred geography of the settlement-this is constituted of the sacred places within the boundaries of the settlement. These places circumscribe the place for work. Of these sacred places the most important is the sacred grove where the shrine of Talurmuttee is located. Here no activity can be undertaken.

Among the Warlis, "the farmer refuses to put poison bait for the rats which are devouring the crop. 'But the rat has the first right to share of the crop' the Warli farmer would tell ..." When a tiger or a leopard takes away a goat or a calf from the herd the elders would say: "whatever is edible will be eaten, the animals also go hungry."¹⁰

According to the labor theory of value commons, that part of the world we live in is where human labor has not been invested. Thus human beings cannot own it. This includes the realm of nature-both human and non-human. This realm has been created by 'the work of nature' which is independent of the labor or the work of man. The scale of time and space required for self-regulating processes in nature to workout extends over several thousands of years. These processes have creatively and continuously added to the abundance and diversity in nature. It constitutes nature's capacity for self-regeneration.

Over approximately four hundred years of history of the industrial revolution we have observed that the time and space for creative self-regulatory processes has shrunk. On account of which variations and plentitude are no longer infinite and inexhaustible. This has undermined not only the survival of species but also the basic conditions of life itself. At various levels of our existence we suffer the depletion of the capacity to recover and regenerate.

17.02 Action and Reflection

Is the idea of 'commons' linked with freedoms of mind, body and spirit? Justify your answer.

To overcome this crisis the relation between man and nature needs to provide for the time and space required for nature to recover its creative capacity. This work of nature can be protected from the work of man by recognizing rights of nature to time and space and according design systems of use that do not violate these rights. Indeed human beings must take from nature only that much which will not only leave enough for others at a given point in time but will also give time and space for creative processes in nature to work out.

17.6 Conclusion

The self-regulatory capability of nature is a gift. It is the condition for the possibility of human existence. How could there be time and space for the work of nature when human relation to nature is mediated through groups?

The idea of commons is not limited to property but to other freedoms of the mind, the body and the spirit that are linked with it. The first thing we have in common is freedom without which there is neither the mind nor the spirit. These three are gifts of nature. We cannot be free until we cooperate with each other. This is because no one can live by himself in absolute freedom.

However with the cooperation of others he can. That is to say my freedom is linked to the freedom of the other. To be free one condition is independence. In this the highest form of freedom is the freedom from 'self'. Without this the other cannot be free. Property relation could be designed to ensure that there is no other in the process of using it for production. Such property relations constitute the commons for forest dwellers in India. The sacred groves are one instance. The commons is the source of regeneration and revitalizations. What makes sacred groves commons is the capacity for self-regeneration or self-reproduction. This capacity cannot be valued; it is valueless because its scale of time and space is far beyond the human scale. A realm of nature that cannot be measured is thus left untouched. It is inaccessible.

There are no technical solutions to this problem, that is to say no technology or technique can measure it. This makes it the commons. The commons are indispensable and for this reason people have a relationship with it. The struggles for the recovery of the commons are thus not confined to the restoration of community ownership. It must be based on an understanding that nature has as much right to expression, and this is our freedom. The cultural systems described are only illustrations of what exists on the ground in many parts of India. From them we learn alternative principle of organizing the economy. These may not be universalisable. However, for that reason they should be given space for self-expression and not be transformed into either private property or public property.

17.7 Further Reading

Prabhu, Pradip. 2003. *Nature, Culture and Diversity: The Indigenous Ways of Life*. In Smitu Kothari, Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, eds., *The Value of Nature-Ecological Politics in India*. New Delhi: Rainbow Publishers.

Singh, Chahatrapati. 1986. *Common Property and Common Poverty- India's Forests, Forest Dwellers and the Law*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Endnotes

1 <http://www.friendsofthecommons.org/index.html> last accessed on 1 August 2005

2 N.S. Jodha Common property resources and dynamics of rural poverty in India's dry regions in *Unasylva* - No. 180 - Vol. 46 - 1995/1

3 M. Sarin Joint forest management in India: achievements and unaddressed challenges in *Unasylva* - No. 180 - Vol. 46 - 1995/1

4 "Declining food grain production and access to food remain the two biggest problems confronting the country. There must be something terribly wrong with the way we look at agriculture. With more than 70 percent of the population still engaged in agriculture and allied activities and an equal percentage of farmers tilling an average of 0.2 hectares of land and somehow surviving against all odds, time has come to set the balance right..." Devinder Sharma *Politics of Diversity and Food Security* in Smitu Kothari, Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, 2003. ed *The Value of Nature-Ecological Politics in India*. New Delhi, Rainbow Publishers.

5 "The Tragedy of the Commons," Garrett Hardin, in *Science*, 162(1968):1243-1248.

6 The word "tragedy" following the philosopher Whitehead: "The essence of dramatic tragedy is not unhappiness. It resides in the solemnity of the remorseless working of things." He then goes on to say, "This inevitableness of destiny can only be illustrated in terms of human life by incidents which in fact involve unhappiness. For it is only by them that the futility of escape can be made evident in the drama."

7 "The Tragedy of the Commons," Garrett Hardin, in *Science*, 162(1968):1243-1248

8 Beryl Crowe (1969) *The tragedy of the common revisited* reprinted in Garrett Hardin and John Baden *Managing the Commons* W.H. Freeman, 1977

9 Property is classified into two generic types: private and the common. Within private property, only an individual and his family have legal rights to the benefits arising from its resources and capital. Within common property, access and utility are not limited to an individual and his family but are shared commonly by many people. Common property can be further classified as being of two distinct types: that which is the product of organised labour, and that, which is the product of nature's labour. In the former class feature public transport, entertainment places, service offices, hospitals etc. etc. These things are now generally called public property. In the latter class fall natural forests, ponds, streams, ores, minerals, fuels, sand, mud, limestone and other types of stones and salts in Chahatrapati Singh Common Property and common Poverty-India's Forests, Forest Dwellers and the Law. Oxford University Press Delhi.1986 p 1.

Pradip Prabhu. Nature, Culture and Diversity: The Indigenous Ways of Life in Smitu Kothari, Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld, 2003. ed The Value of Nature-Ecological Politics in India. New Delhi, Rainbow Publishers.. p 77



Unit 18

Tribe and Caste

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- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Transformation to castes
- 18.3 Sanskritisation
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- 18.5 Language
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- 18.7 Tribe as community
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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to understand:

- The nature of tribal transformation to castes;
- The processes of sanskritisation and hinduisation vis-à-vis tribes;
- Language as a unique factor of tribal identity;
- Bases of misconstruction of tribal identity;
- Community life of tribe.

18.1 Introduction

In the post-independence period not only does one find greater concern but also more systematic efforts towards distinguishing tribe from caste. And yet, till today scholars have not been able to arrive at a systematically worked out criterion. In general they have tried to distinguish one from the other on the basis of a number of criteria. It has generally been assumed that the two represent two different forms of social organizations. Castes have been treated as one regulated by the hereditary division of labour, hierarchy, principle of purity and pollution, civic and religious disabilities, etc. Tribes on the other hand have been seen as one characterized by the absence of features attributed to the caste. The two types of social organizations are also considered as governed by the different set of principles.

It is said that bonds of kinship govern the tribal society. Each individual is hence considered to be equal to others. The lineage and clan tend to be the chief unit of ownership as well as of production and consumption. In contrast inequality, dependency and subordination is an integral feature of caste society. It is also said that tribes do not differentiate as sharply as caste groups do, the differences between the utilitarian and non-utilitarian function of the religion. Caste groups tend to maintain different forms, practices and behaviour pattern for each of these two aspects of the religion. Tribes in contrast maintain similar forms, practices and behaviour pattern for both function of the religion. Tribes and castes are also shown to be different in respect of the psychological disposition of its members. Tribes are said to take direct, unalloyed satisfaction in pleasures of the senses whether in food, drink, sex, dance or song. As against this caste people maintain certain ambivalence about such pleasures.

Further, in the 'jati' society, the village is expected to be culturally heterogeneous, with each jati following a unique combination of customary

practices. Tribesmen on the other hand expect their society to be homogeneous or, at least, not necessarily heterogeneous (Mandelbaum, 1970: 577). From attempt such as these and some others, certain images and propositions have been developed with respect to the concept of tribe in India. These include such facets as absence of exploiting classes and organized state structures; multi-functionality of kinship bonds; all pervasive religion; segmentary character of socio-economic unit; frequent cooperation for common goals; shallow history; distinct taboos, customs and moral codes; youth dormitory; low level of technology; common name, territory, descent, language, culture etc. (Pathy, 1992: 50).

Paradoxically however these sets of denominators in terms of which tribes are differentiated from the non-tribes, that is, castes are not subscribed to by a large number of groups identified as tribes in India. And even groups, that do subscribe these attributes, hardly stand in the same or similar relation to each other, in respect of these attributes. At one end there are groups that subscribe to these features in *toto* and the other end are those that hardly show these attributes. The large majority of them however stand somewhere in between subscribing to the attributes referred above to a greater or lesser degree. Assumptions associated with the tribes more often than not have therefore been misleading and fallacious to a considerable extent. Notwithstanding such differences among groups in relation to subscription of such attributes they have however all been identified as tribes. The only thing they however seem to share in common is, as Beteille puts it, that they all stand more or less outside of Hindu civilization. And since the identification of tribes is also linked with the administration of political and administrative considerations, little effort has been made to critically examine it. Rather they have been uncritically accepted among the social scientists.

18.2 Transformation to castes

In the colonial ethnography, the concern shown by the British administrator-scholars to mark off tribe from caste also gave rise to a particular conception of a tribe. That is, tribes were one which lived in isolation from the rest of the population and therefore without any interaction or interconnection with them. In contrast the main concern in the post-colonial ethnography has been to show close interaction of the tribes with the larger society or the civilization. The relation has, of course, been differently conceptualized. Sinha (1958) views tribes as a dimension of little tradition that cannot be adequately understood unless it is seen in relation to the great tradition. In contrast Beteille (1986: 316) sees tribes more as a matter of remaining outside of state and civilization in contexts where tribe and civilization co-exist, as in India and the Islamic world. Thus, though the distinction is maintained, the two are treated not as isolated but in interaction with each other. Even when tribes have been conceived as remaining outside the state, which has been most often the case, they have not been treated as falling outside the civilization influence. Hence, tribes have been viewed as being in constant interaction with the civilization. Consequently the tribal society has not been seen as static but in a process of change.

One of the dominant modes in which the transformation of the tribal society has been conceived is in terms of tribe moving in the direction of becoming a part of civilization by getting absorbed into the society that represents civilization. Both historians and anthropologists have made such observation in the context of the past. Kosambi (1975) has referred to tribal elements being fused into the general society. Similarly, N.K.Bose (1941) makes reference of tribes being absorbed into the Hindu society. Such a claim has not gone abetted. A large number of anthropological works of the post-independence era still point to phenomena such as tribes being absorbed or assimilated into Hindu society or tribes becoming caste. Tribes are said to have accepted the

ethos of caste structure and absorbed within it. Hence they are treated as hardly differentiable from those of neighbouring Hindu peasantry. Some of the well-known tribes in this category are said to be Bhils, Bhumij, Majhi, Khasa and Raj-Gond. In fact, much of the social anthropological discourse on tribes has been primarily couched in terms of tribes being transformed to caste. Nowhere is this better reflected than in the classification of tribes provided by the eminent anthropologists. Different scholars have of course made the classification differently; but all invariably refer to a stage of incorporation into the Hindu society. Some of the classifications in vogue are referred below.

Roy Burman (1972) in his earlier work classified tribes as (1) those incorporated in the Hindu society, (2) those positively oriented to Hindu society, (3) those negatively oriented and (4) those indifferent to the Hindu society. Vidyarthi (1977) talked of tribes as (1) those living in forest, (2) those in rural areas, (3) semi-acculturated, (4) acculturated and (5) assimilated. Elwin (1944) categorized tribes into four categories. These were (1) purest of the pure tribal groups, (2) those in contact with the plains and therefore changing but still retaining the tribal mode of living, (3) those forming the lower rung of the Hindu society, (4) those adopted to full Hindu faith and living in modern style. The criteria of classification used by Vidyarthi suffer from the lack of logical consistency. Elwin even went to the extent of writing that the whole aboriginal problem was one of how to enable the tribesmen of the first and the second classes to advance direct into the fourth class without having to suffer the despair and degradation of the third. Dube too classifies tribes along almost the same lines as those of Elwin. There are also many others including Bose, Fuchs etc. who have not made specific classifications but do make mention of tribes occupying either the lower or the higher rung by getting absorbed into the Hindu society.

There are of course scholars who caution us from such conception of transformation of the tribes. Roy-Burman (1983,1994) in his later writings points out that if the transformation of tribe into peasant is not to be taken for granted, the transformation of tribe into caste in the Indian context can also hardly be taken for granted. This he does by providing a critique of the Bose and Srinivas models. He points to lack of protection from caste for the Hinduised tribes, the rationale for transformation of tribe into caste in Bose's model and empirical reality of contra- Sanskritic movements against Srinivas' model. Pathy (1992:50-51) questions the dominant trend of understanding tribal transformation into caste on account of lack of historical and contextual evidence. Yet he endorses quite approvingly the observation of Kosambi when he says that the entire course of Indian history shows that tribal elements are being fused into general society.

18.01 Action and Reflection

Is there process of tribal transformation into caste? Give answer to your statement.

The transformation of the tribes into castes is conceived to occur through certain methods that have again been diversely conceptualized. Kosambi (1975) considers adoption of technology of the Hindu society by the tribes to be the major method of getting integrated into the Hindu society. Bose (1941) talks of the Hindu method of absorption that takes place under the system of the organization of the production. He says that tribes are drawn into the system because they find protection within the system, the system being non-competitive. Sanskritisation is also seen as a kind of method through which tribes are absorbed into the Hindu society. The other significant method of the tribal absorption into the Hindu society is what Sinha (1962, 1987) calls as the state formation. He states that the process of acculturation, Hinduisation and social stratification within the village could not be properly understood

unless the data were examined in the broader context of the formation of the principality. He further writes that the formation of the state provided the decisive socio-political framework for the transformation of the tribal system into the regional caste system.

18.3 Sanskritization

As noted earlier it has generally been held that tribes in contact with the non-tribes have been undergoing change and change has been in the direction of absorption in the Hindu society through complexity of social processes. Scholars have conceptualized the processes at work diversely. This is evident from the range of terms that have been used to capture the processes, the most common being the terms of Sanskritisation and Hinduisation. At times anthropologists have also made use of such specific terms as Kshatriyisation and Rajputisation in place of Sanskritisation. These terms describe different social processes at work though in actual empirical reality these processes coincide and overlap. Notwithstanding this there has been tendency among the social scientists to use them interchangeably or synonymously. More often than not the difficulties arising from the use of such terms are overcome by use of such generic terms as acculturation, assimilation, absorption etc. However the main processes through which transformation of tribe into caste is understood are Hinduisation and Sanskritisation.

The question is whether such processes as Hinduisation, Sanskritisation etc. that occur in the tribal society lead to the dislocation of tribal society and pave the way for its absorption in the Hindu society? Does tribe by virtue of getting acculturated cease to be tribe and become caste? In fact, almost all scholars referred to earlier tend to think so. To these scholars, tribes eventually cease to exist as entities independent of the caste society from which they were earlier differentiated. The fact of the matter is that while this may have been the case in the past, it is no longer true of India after independence.

Since acculturation of tribes to Hindu society or transformation of tribes to caste is attributed to the process of Sanskritisation/ Hinduisation, it is imperative at the very outset to examine the appropriateness of these terms and concepts especially of Sanskritisation. Sanskritisation is seen as a process whereby the communities lower down the rung emulate the life-style of the dominant caste of the region. By this process of emulation, the castes lower down the rung would move up in the ladder of the caste hierarchy. At times, more specific terms such as Kshatriyisation or Rajputisation have been used to describe such a process. Now this process was used to understand the dynamics of social change within caste society. Sociologists and social anthropologists have however also extended this term and concept to describe certain process of change that has been going on in the tribal society. Is this extension valid to describe transformations being witnessed in the tribal society? In my view the extension, in the sense in which it is used, is far from appropriate in the context of tribal society. It is inappropriate because it assumes that tribes are first of all part of Hindu society and second that they are part of the caste society. Tribes have however been conceived as tribes precisely because they are outside the Hindu as well as the caste society. That is, tribe is a society that remains outside the caste-Hindu society. Can there be a process of Sanskritization as it has been conceived without tribe's first becoming part of the caste Hindu society? The process demands that tribes first must enter the Hindu society.

18.02 Action and Reflection

Does Sanskritisation exist among Tribals? Discuss.

The question that arises is whether Hinduisation is the same as Sanskritisation. The two are, of course, interrelated but it may be more appropriate to describe the processes involved in the context of tribes as Hinduisation rather than Sanskritisation. This is so because climbing up the hierarchy is not the overriding concern among the tribes. Of course it is not possible to conceive of Hindu faith and practices outside that of caste organization. Hinduisation thus invariably entails assuming some caste status. But the caste status that is accorded to the tribes is said to be one of 'low caste status'. If this is the case, where is the process of social mobility in the case of the tribes? What is it that tribes gain through this process? Neither have they made claim for higher status (Hardiman, 1987: 158-159). Rather it is outsiders who impose such a status on the tribes. In fact, even after Hinduisation tribes by and large remain outside the hierarchical structure of the Hindu society. If at all there have been such claims, these have been made, as we shall see only after they have been drawn into the larger social structure of the neighbouring Hindu and linguistic community.

The problem with the concept of Sanskritisation in the case of the tribes does not end there. In fact, there is also a problem of the reference group. It is far from clear from the literature as to which of the caste groups, tribes (barring those belonging to royal or chiefly lineage) emulated in their respective region. The royal/chiefly lineage has invariably emulated the Rajputs and has entered into matrimonial alliance with them. Thus whereas the upper strata of the tribal society got integrated into Hindu caste society, the subjects continued to live outside Hindu society though there may have been a process of Hinduisation among them. Climbing up the ladder of hierarchy had been not their main concern. Given this, it would perhaps be more appropriate to speak of Hinduisation than of Sanskritisation in the context of tribes in India. Further, if at all tribes consider some castes as superior, it is not because of their caste status but because they happen to be jagirdars, thicadars, lambadars, etc.

The question that may be asked then is why tribes Hinduism themselves even though they attain no higher status? Do they want to be absorbed into the larger society? Well, this may have been the case in the past but it is no longer the case today. Today, the process of acculturation into ideas, values and practices of the dominant community is more of being like the dominant community than one of being part of that society by assuming some caste status.

18.4 Hinduisation

It is thus apparent that tribes have been described as caste more for the aspect of Hinduisation than sanskritisation. Indeed this seems to be the most often than not the basis for describing tribes as caste in the social anthropological literature. And yet can they be described as castes just because they have become hinduised? Is the process of Hinduisation sufficient enough for designating a group as caste? Is it not possible for a tribe to be handiest and yet remain outside the caste system viz., to be governed by the social organizational principles of a tribe rather than of caste? Aspects such as these have either not been given sufficient attention to or have been overlooked in studies where tribes have been modeled on the caste or the civilization framework. If Hindu society cannot be understood outside caste society, then transformation of the tribe into caste or Hindu society as the scholars have been arguing is problematic. Indeed the whole argument of the transformation of tribes into caste seems to be misplaced and even erroneous.

Theoretically it is possible to become Hindu in the sense of embracing a form of Hindu faith and practices without becoming part of the Hindu society in the sense of Hindu social organization viz. caste. If on the other hand Hindu

society and caste organization are inseparable, then Hinduisation alone cannot account for the transformation of the tribe into caste. In fact there are other aspects, to which sociologists and social anthropologists need to give some attention to. These are aspects such as whether tribes actually become part of the structure of caste society after they have taken to the process of Hinduisation/ Sanskritisation? What caste name do they bear and what definite position they occupy in the caste hierarchy? It is also not clear whether groups involved in the process occupy the same position or there is hierarchical arrangement among them as has been the case with the untouchables. Also what caste roles do they assume, say in villages where both tribe and castes inhabit, as in most villages of Chotanagpur where caste groups like Banias, Brahmin, Rajputs and others live in the same village as the tribals? In fact, the nature and kind of interaction tribes enter into with the caste members of the society is governed more by market and economic interdependence than that of purity-pollution. Further their life in the village continues to be grounded on the principle of kinship bonds and absence of hierarchical ordering. In short, tribes do not enter into any kind of social, cultural and ritual dependence with the caste structure of the society even after acculturation into the Hindu belief system and practices. It is doubtful then if it is appropriate to study people described as tribes from the perspective of the caste structure? This is precisely however what the anthropologists have done. They have tried to find caste where it does not exist.

Box 18.1: Paradox of Hinduisation of Tribes

Tribes have not moved into processes like Hinduisation or Sanskritisation as a whole group. The general pattern among them is that only a section of them move to a new pattern of life provided either by Christianity or Hinduism or Islam etc. If this is the case more often than not, can we describe some people of the same group as caste and others as tribe? Can one and the same group become caste and tribes at the same time? The empirical reality of a village where tribes form a minority and are absorbed into the Hindu society is extended to villages and regions where they may not be minority and where even if there is process of Hinduisation, they may not abandon their old affinities and identity. Where, however, tribes have taken to Hinduisation as a whole, they have to a great extent molded themselves along caste lines. They have even identified themselves as caste and others too have addressed them as castes rather than as tribes. The Koch-Rajbongshis of Assam and West Bengal referred to above may be taken as a case in point. But the phenomenon of the group as a whole moving to a different value system is rather rare. But even where such thing has happened, it has not given rise to a hierarchical caste structure. The group as a whole tends in general to belong to the same strata. Neither is the group adequately integrated into the caste structure of the neighbouring regional community.

In examining the question of the transformation of tribe into caste, it is not enough to limit the discussion only to the relationship between tribes and the caste society. There is also a need to look into how tribes themselves perceived, identified and related themselves with the caste society. How did tribes perceive themselves after they have taken to certain aspects of Hindu beliefs and practices? Did they perceive and identify themselves as tribes or as castes? The important ways through which tribes took recourse to the process of Hinduisation or Sanskritisation are what anthropologists have described as the 'religious / cultural movement'. The movement has been more popularly described as the Bhagat movement among the tribes. In fact despite the process of Hinduisation/ Sanskritisation, tribes do not set aside a section of them as caste and another as tribe. They are not treated as those having moved away from the status of the tribes. Rather tribes are categorized into different groups depending on the type of religious values they have taken recourse to mould their life. They are therefore differently described such as Christians, Bhagats, Sarnas, etc.

It is interesting to note that tribes even when they have been hinduized do not describe themselves as Hindus but as Bhagats. It is outsiders, census officials and anthropologists who have tended to describe them as 'Hindus'. Anthropologists have even been prone to describe them as castes. Tribes however do not identify and designate themselves as belonging to different castes in the sense used and understood by the outsiders and the social scientists. Nowhere is this aspect of distinctive identity, more glaring than in the movements launched by the tribes especially pertaining to autonomy, land, forest and employment. In these movements the divide between caste and tribe has been relatively sharp. And yet tribes that have been hinduised have shown solidarity with groups described as tribes as against those of the caste categories. In short, the process of Hinduisation is necessary but not sufficient for tribes to be integrated into the structure of the Hindu society viz. the caste society. To be integrated, tribes must be drawn to the social organization of the caste system, that is, by and large, not an empirical reality.

18.5 Language

The discussion above points to the fact that it is not possible to become a caste without being first integrated into the structure of Hindu society. Where such integration did occur, a very important process has been the acculturation of the tribes into the language of the regional community. It is significant to note that castes as a social organization are operative only within a linguistic community. Hence it is possible for tribe to become caste only after it has been assimilated into the regional linguistic community such as the Bengali or the Oriya or the Assamese community. This process of acculturation that is so central to integration in the regional community and therefore caste society has unfortunately been glossed over by the sociologists and social anthropologists. In fact, it is not possible to get integrated into the caste society without first getting integrated into the linguistic community. Correspondingly tribes were not only differentiated in opposition to castes but also in opposition to the dominant community of the region. The dominant community was invariably a linguistic community. Besides representing different language it also represented different religion, customs, social organization and the way of life.

This raises an interesting question viz. whether tribes after they have become handiest and even 'caste-like' are to be treated either as castes or as tribes if they continue to maintain their language? After all, as noted earlier, tribes have also been conceived in opposition to language or the linguistic community. Can they be both tribes and castes at the same time? This seems far from tenable, as the two not only constitute a different linguistic community but also two contrasting types of social organizations. Are then tribes to be treated as castes just because there has been process of Hinduisation among them? Do tribes by Hinduising and Sanskritising become castes while retaining on the other hand their language, culture, custom, social practices and so on? What is important to note is the influence of the Hinduism or the Hindus on tribes. This however does not make them the Hindus. To be Hindus they need to be drawn into the structure of the Hindu society, which is possible only by getting drawn into the structure of the regional linguistic community. Tribes are differentiated from non-tribes not on the basis of religion alone. That is what the colonial ethnographers did.

Anthropologists have differentiated tribes from others however on more than one criterion. Of these the most important have been language and the social organization of the caste. Tribes have been thus treated as tribes precisely because they have been outside the dominant regional community and thereby outside the complex of civilization. However even with changes at the level of culture including religion and language one is still not sure if tribes could

be said to have become castes. Much, of course, was dependent on the nature of their linkage with the social structure of the regional linguistic and Hindu society. Indeed what seem to me to be the most crucial feature for integration of tribes into the structure of the regional community are not only religion and language but also the organizational structure of the regional community.

Of the aspects of acculturation, acculturation into language is to my mind more important than of religion though the latter is not altogether unimportant. Unfortunately sociologists and anthropologists have never given language the place it deserves in understanding the transformation of tribes into caste. And yet without going into these questions anthropologists have jumped to the conclusion that tribes are becoming caste or getting integrated into the Hindu society.

It is also to be noted that being drawn into a larger society does not mean that tribes cease to interact as a society. Do they then by virtue of cultural change within society cease to be society? Does Bengali society cease to be a society in the wake of the process of westernization and modernization within it? The paradox is that nobody ever denies the existence and identity of the Bengali society but if the same process occurs in tribal society, the general trend is to negate its existence. That tribes exist as a society as much as the other societies exist is unfortunately denied to tribal society when it undergoes change in the context of its encounter with the larger society. Anthropologists have been swift to incorporate them into the larger society at the slightest sign of change in them. In their zeal to emphasize change or the acculturation process, the aspect of continuity about which anthropologists so fondly talk about in the context of the larger Indian reality has been completely overlooked in the context of tribal social reality.

What the discussion points to, is that the conclusions such as ones reached by sociologists/ social anthropologists are based on inadequacy of ethnography, concept and even logic. There is hardly any inquiry into the ways in which the Hinduised tribes are linked with the castes and the ways in which they relate with their original group. Also no effort whatsoever has been made to ascertain if the acculturated tribes were regulated by the principle of caste organization or of the organization of tribe? Issues such as these that are central to the argument in support of transformation of tribe into caste has unfortunately not been adequately looked into and examined. Not only that but even the concepts such as Sanskritisation and Hinduisation used for understanding the transformation into caste are inadequate for advancing argument in support of such transformation.

18.6 Basis for misconstruction

The concepts of caste against which the tribes have been studied have invariably led scholars as noted above to state or conclude that tribes are becoming caste. What this in effect means is that tribes by virtue of moving to this have become like other segments of the Indian society and as such cease to be tribes. There is in fact nothing left in them of what had gone into the making of the tribes. What this has led to, is a kind of conception whereby tribes/ tribal societies by becoming caste, peasant or socially differentiated cease to be tribes or tribal societies. There is then something teleological involved in the study of tribes/ tribal society in the Indian context. Before we begin studying, we already know the direction in which the tribal society is moving. Nowhere is this more obvious than the contrasts against which tribal societies have been studied. Elsewhere in the world where tribes are not linked with the civilization complex, such problems does not arise as tribes there are studied in their own rights and against the backdrop of process at work in those societies. They are not studied against the end point represented

by the communities that are part of civilization as has been the case with India. Hence whereas elsewhere the focus of study has been on how tribes are changing and becoming nationalities or nations in the process, the focus in India has been on how tribes are becoming castes, peasants and stratified.

It follows as a corollary then that tribes cease to be tribes or the tribal society. And since these are the features with which the general Indian society is characterized, tribes are viewed as absorbed into the general Indian society. As a corollary what follows is that tribes through these processes cease to be tribes and thereby cease to constitute and maintain a separate society and identity. Tribes are primarily being studied from the perspective of how they are getting drawn into mainstream of civilization. The end result is that the reality of caste remains intact but that of tribe disappears and this will increasingly spread as tribal societies come in intensive contact with the outside world. Such an empirical and conceptual scenario in the study of tribes exists in India precisely because of the way (1) tribes have been conceptualized in the anthropological literature and (2) the reference in terms of which they have been investigated. In nutshell, tribes have not been studied in their own right but only in relation to the general Indian society, which was marked by overriding features of caste, peasant and social differentiation.

Now in the conceptualization of tribes in anthropology, three distinct but interrelated elements are intertwined. To begin with, tribes in anthropology are first of all invariably seen as society. It is a society like all other societies. That is, it is made up of people; it has boundaries (people either belonging or not belonging to them) and that people belong to society in virtue of rules under which they stand, and which impose on them regular, determinate ways of acting towards and in regard to one another. The characteristic of tribe as a society is related through its boundaries. At the same time, boundaries of tribes have been defined- linguistically, culturally and politically by anthropologists. Boundaries set certain limit of interaction in the legal, political, economic and social relation of its members.

Secondly tribes are also seen as a type of society, a society that is different from other types of societies. Godelier (1977: 30) for example, sees tribal societies as being characterized by certain positive and negative features. The negatives are marked by absence of the positive traits of the modern society viz., non-literate, uncivilized, non-industrialized, non-specialized etc. The positives are those absent from the modern societies viz. social relations based on kinship bond, all pervasive religion, frequency of cooperation for common goal etc.

Thirdly tribes are also seen, as representing a particular stage in the socio-political formation and with passage of time will move to new stage such as nation, nationality or the nationhood. Now while these three distinct aspects have gone in the making of the concept, the last two have overshadowed the first to which the tribes owe their separate and independent existence. What has however happened in the process is that tribes have been primarily seen as a stage and type of society. They are seen as representing a society that lacks positive traits of the modern society.

To put it differently, they constitute primitive, simple, illiterate, and backward societies. With changes in the features that constitute its specific features due education, specialization, modern occupation, new technology etc. tribal society is no longer considered as a tribal society. If the transformation is in the direction of caste then it is described as having become caste society. If the reference is peasant then it is posited as the peasant society and if the general direction of transformation is social differentiation, then it is described as a society socially differentiated. The end result is that tribal society is no

longer considered a tribal society and rightly so if it is thought in terms of stage and the specific features. But as said earlier tribe is also society, similar to any other kind of society but even this comes to be denied with the denial of tribal society as such on account of the changed situation. With this the very existence of tribe as an independent and separate living entity is put to stake. What has happened in the process is that anthropologists and other social scientists have overlooked the context in which the term tribe came to be used in Indian society.

18.03 Action and Reflection

Do you think that tribes in India have not been studied in their own rights but in relation to the general Indian society? Justify your statement.

In the Indian context tribes were identified and described primarily in terms of them being outside the civilization. There is then something clumsy about the use of the concept 'tribe' in describing the Indian social reality. Such problems may not arise when tribes do not coexist with the non-tribal societies. Indeed problems of the type referred above could be overcome by the use of the term 'indigenous' people but not without giving rise to problems of a different dimension. Such a problem is rooted in the concept and conceptual framework that have been used to understand transformation in the tribal society in India. There is then something clumsy and basically wrong with the use of the term tribe in the Indian context.

18.7 Tribe as community

In view of this what is suggested as the term of reference for the study of tribes in India is the terms that tribal people themselves use to identify themselves and as they are known and addressed as, by the other people surrounding them. It is common experience that groups and communities brought under the broad category of tribe do not identify themselves in terms of tribes, (except by the educated) but by their tribes' name such as the Santhals, the Oraons, the Khasis or the Garos, etc. Even in history this was how groups identified as tribes now were being identified and addressed. Ray (1972: 8-10) points to this in his introductory essay on the volume in Tribal Situation in India. He writes that we know that there were janaks or communities of people like the Savaras, the Kullutas, the Kollas, the Bhillas, the Khasas, the Kinnaras and a countless number of many others whom today we know as 'tribes', bearing almost the same recognizable names. Yet the term and concept by which they were known to the multitudes of people were not 'tribes' but jana meaning 'communities of people'.

Hence the point being made here is to study tribes in India in reference to the actual communities they belong to and represent, that is, as the Santhals, the Khasis, the Gonds, etc. If tribes are studied as such, then the kind of problems we are confronted with, when we use the term tribe will be overcome. Transformation occurring in the tribal society either in the direction of caste, peasant, social differentiation, or religion becomes meaningful without in any way affecting the identity of the group concerned. The transformations become meaningful precisely because tribes besides being a type of society and the stage of society are also societies. This means that the terms of reference in the tribal studies are not to be categories as caste, peasant or social heterogeneity but groups or communities such as those of the regional communities- the Bengalis, Assamese, Gujratis, etc.

The counterparts of tribes are not castes or peasants as has been the case so far but communities or societies incorporating castes and peasants, for the latter are not the whole society but only an element of the whole. Tribes on the other hand are whole societies like any other society with their own

language, territory, culture and custom and so on. Hence, as societies they must be compared with other societies and not 'castes' as has been the case in the sociological and anthropological writings. Of course, the perspective may not be useful in case of small tribal groups like the Halpatis, the Dublas, etc.

18.8 Conclusion

The idea of 'tribe' and 'caste' are differing social categories. The two differing social categories are often held wrong by sociologists and anthropologists by and large, by considering tribes in India as a part of larger categories of Indian societies. Till today scholars have not been able to arrive at a systematically worked out criterion towards distinguishing tribe from caste. In general they have tried to distinguish one from the other on the basis of a number of criteria.

It has generally been assumed that the two represent two different forms of social organizations. Castes have been treated as one regulated by the hereditary division of labour, hierarchy, principle of purity and pollution, civic and religious disabilities, etc. Tribes on the other hand have been seen as one characterized by the absence of features attributed to the caste. The two types of social organizations are also considered as governed by the different set of principles.

Therefore, there is a need to understand these two categories in proper perspective. In other words, the terms of reference in the tribal studies should not be considered as categories as caste, peasant or social heterogeneity', but they must be studied as 'groups' or 'actual communities' they belong to and represent, such as, those of the regional communities'. It is common experience that groups and communities brought under the broad category of tribe do not identify themselves in terms of tribes, (except by the educated) but by their tribes' name such as the Santhals, the Oraons, the Khasis or the Garos, etc. This truth also necessitates to understand in proper perspective the notion and process of tribal transformation, Sanskritisation and Hinduisation, language factor in tribal identity, the issue of misconstruction of tribal identity, and community life of tribes.

18.8 Further Reading

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Unit 19

Elwin and Ghurye's Perspectives on Tribes

Contents

- 19.1 The framing of the tribal question: Elwin and Ghurye
- 19.2 A History of the tribal voice
- 19.3 Nationalist freedom struggle and tribals
- 19.4 Constituent Assembly debate and tribal people
- 19.5 Conclusion
- 19.6 Further Reading

Learning objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- The framework of tribal question;
- Historical background of tribal voice;
- Nationalist freedom struggle and tribals; and
- Constituent Assembly debate on tribal affairs.

19.1 The Framing of the Tribal Question: Elwin and Ghurye

The autonomy and independence of tribal people in India is circumscribed by the legal regime laid out in the fifth and the sixth schedules of the Constitution of India. Their population is distributed over all states, except Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Laccadive, and Pondichery. A large percentage inhabits a large contiguous geographical belt that divides India into the Northern and Southern parts. This belt extends from the North East Frontier region into the Santal Parganas and the Chotanagpur plateau in West Bengal and Bihar into Orissa and Andhra Pradesh in the Southeast into Madhya Pradesh in Central India up to Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra in Western India. Outside this belt there are pockets inhabited by tribal people in North and South India.¹

The tribal population is socially, culturally, economically and politically differentiated on account of the different histories of interaction between them and the non-tribal people. There are only a few places where tribal people dwell in deep-forest, and continue to practice shifting cultivation for instance, in Abujmarh in Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) and in Koraput and Phulbani (in Orissa). A majority of them however, live on wastelands, in settled agriculture regions, in towns and cities. Their mode of earning livelihood varies from teaching in schools and colleges to white collar jobs to running small shops to industrial entrepreneurs. Economically, a large number are poor because either they are landless labour or they are cultivators with small unproductive land holdings. Some are rich and some belong to the middle class.² The tribal workforce is distributed over the following categories: cultivators, agricultural workers, livestock, forestry workers, mining and quarry workers, construction workers, workers in the trade and commerce sector, workers in the transport, storage and communications sector, and workers in other services (this includes white collar jobs, schoolteachers, etc.).

Culturally, the tribal languages of India can be grouped into four major families: the Austric, the Tibeto-Chinese, the Dravidian, and the Indo-Aryan.³ Grigson's *Linguistic Survey Of India* recorded 179 languages and 544 dialects. Of the 179 languages 116 were enumerated as tribal languages and dialects, the tribes of

Nagaland alone spoke 55 dialects.⁴ As regards their linguistic skills are concerned they are bilingual if not multi-lingual. Over years of interaction with the non-tribal people a large majority has converted either to Hinduism or Christianity or Buddhism or Islam and have also moved away from their tradition of work. This has influenced not only their linguistic ability but also their thought patterns. Modern development has created conditions on the one hand that discourage the use of their mother tongue and on the other hand to use the mother tongue as a medium of education. It is not uncommon to observe that converted tribal people use their mother tongue to communicate the content of religions they have adopted. Only those, who live in deep-forest continue to practice their own religion. Unlike those who have converted, their mother tongue is also the language of their thought.

The legal regime laid out in the 5th and 6th schedules has its origins in the Act of 1935, which created, excluded and partially excluded areas where a different set of laws will govern the life of tribal people. Elwin pointed out:

“Section 52 and 92 of the Act provided for the reservation of certain predominantly aboriginal areas (to be known as Excluded or Partially excluded areas) from operation of Provincial legislature. The executive of authority of provinces extends to ‘excluded’ and partially excluded areas therein’, but the administration of excluded areas is under the governor at his discretion and partially excluded areas are administered by the ministers subject to the special responsibility for their peace and good government imposed on the governor by the section 52(e) of the Art. Thus the governor is given the power to control the application of legislation whether of the Federal or Provincial Legislature, and make regulations in both these areas.”⁵

After the Act Ghurye formulated the tribal question. There are three views on the tribal situation: no change and revivalism; isolation and preservation; and finally assimilation.⁶ This was a reflection of how he saw the tribal situation in 1943. He saw them divided into three classes:

“First, such as the Raj Gonds and others who have successfully fought the battle, and are recognized as members of a fairly high status within Hindu society; second the large mass that has been partially Hinduized and has come into closer contact with Hindus; and third the Hill sections, which “have exhibited the greatest power of resistance to alien cultures that have pressed upon their border.”⁷

In this classification he missed out on Christian influence.

In Elwin’s view, “The second class has suffered moral depression and decay as a result of contacts from which the third has been largely free.”⁸

Elwin was anti-missionary and pro Hindu as regards the future of the tribal people.

In 1944 he wrote:

“Missionaries should be withdrawn from the Partially Excluded areas; we insist that all education in these areas should be taken over by the Government. We demand that the Government should do twice as much as the missionaries have achieved. We have no interest in keeping these people backward. If they are to take their place as Kshatriyas in the Hindu social system then they must be trained in the arts of liberal thinking and educated to courage and traditions of honor.”⁹

Like him Ghurye said:

“To enable the so called aborigines to live their lives according to their traditions and customs without active interference from non-aborigines is certainly a desirable end as natural as the grant of responsibility in their administration

to other people. But to exclude these tracts from the operation of the full institution for this purpose implies that the facilities for such a life are likely to be denied by a general community, if the so called aborigines are placed under the same administrative and political machinery. This is not borne out by history.”¹⁰

It is clear that both Elwin and Ghurye argued for assimilation into the Hindu fold.

In 1950 after debate in the constituent assembly the partially excluded and the excluded areas became the fifth and the sixth scheduled areas. Tribal development programs were initiated and the Ghurye-Elwin position remained unquestioned. On the ground, tribal people has no choice other than to become part of the mainstream and get assimilated into the Hindu fold or become part of Christianity.

Today for NGOs and political activists primarily in the fifth schedule areas the Bhuria Committee Report and the subsequent Act of 1996 is an important step towards the realization of self-rule for tribal people in India. These concerns resonate the demand for Tribal autonomy in the sixth schedule areas in the Northeastern frontier regions of India. The Act of 1996 emphasized that “Traditional tribal conventions and laws should continue to hold validity. Harmonisation with modern systems should be consistent herewith. The committee felt that while shaping the new Panchayati Raj structure in tribal areas it is desirable to blend the traditional with the modern by treating the traditional institutions as the foundation on which the modern suprastructure should be built.”¹¹

To what extent does this legal regime equip the tribal people to move towards self-rule? What does self-rule mean when there are only few tribal people who have not become what they are not, that is have not adopted non-tribal religions and cultures? What part of their tradition remains that can harmonize with modern systems?

Perhaps the answer to these questions is not possible with the Elwin-Ghurye framework. Because, firstly, the tribal people are classified into three mutually exclusive classes, Secondly, the tribal relation with the non-tribal people is looked at from the point of view of the state. Finally, there is no effort to hear the voice of tribal peoples as it is articulated through their struggles before the Act of 1935 was passed. In other words, Gharry’s view gives legitimacy to the legal regime set up by the State. It in fact is a form of counter- insurgency because it upholds the value of tradition but takes away its existential ground of sustainability- the forest life world.

Tribal forest-dwellers and other communities have been part of contiguous geographical space and their interaction has enriched the civilization culture of the sub-continent. For instance, the cult of the mother goddess and of Shiva was enriched, and knowledge of medicinal plants was gathered and compiled. With the historical beginnings of Hinduism in medieval India there emerged a notion of ritual hierarchy between man and god, between individual and collective, between self and society, between being in the world and being in the presence of god, between reason and religious belief.

This hierarchy was a feature of sedentary agricultural communities, amongst both Hindu and Muslim. Tribal societies in contrast were pastoral and nomadic in their movement. The nature and frequency of interaction between them was not frequent. The sedentary and pastoral people were distributed over three different kinds of human settlements: the plains, the cities and towns, and the forests. In the plains and in the cities dwelt the Muslims and the Hindus, and in the forests lived the tribal people. There was no notion of the

center and the frontiers. There was no notion either of the dominant and the mainstream, nor the marginal and the peripheral. This latter notion developed on account of colonialism.

Box 19.1: Western view of tribal situation

People in Europe and Great Britain lived in cold temperate areas; the forest dwellers lived in distant tropical areas. Accordingly, the nature of social distance between the forest dwellers and the outsiders was conditioned by the geographical proximity in case of India, and by geographical distance in the case of Europe and Great Britain. This contributed to difference in the way the strangeness of the tribal forest dwellers was viewed by the non-tribal people. This had a methodological implication. It determined the selection of the categories and perspectives deployed to understand the forest dwellers.

When the British and the Europeans discovered the aborigines in Australia, the Pacific in the 16th century, it presented the problem of cultural discontinuity to the Western conscience in a sudden and dramatic manner. By the 18th century “the problem was set in purely historical and sociological terms... authors agreed ... that it is possible to compare those societies which would today be called primitive with Western civilization... moreover, they doubted that cultural discontinuity exists as the apparent witness and last vestige of a once common development.”¹²

This view of historical development emerged at a particular point in the history of Europe¹³ (Uberoi, 1978). From the 17th and 18th century onwards natural sciences determined thinking about ‘nature’ and about man’s place in the world.

The natural science methodologies were mechanically adopted by social sciences. For instance, this led to “anthropology... establishing its claim to be regarded as a study which has an immediate practical value in connection with the administration and education of backward peoples”. This raised the question: “What sort of anthropological investigations are of practical value in connection with such problems of administration? What is the “historical and functional interpretation of culture in relation to the practical application of anthropology to the Control of Native Peoples.”¹⁴

Colonial rule in conformity with this thinking compared forest dwellers in India with the aborigines in Australia Africa and the Pacific islands and were described as ‘backward’, ‘primitive’ and ‘uncivilised’ tribal people. After India became independent, this colonial understanding continued the debates and discussions in the center. Nehru’s ‘Panchsheel’ was formulated around this understanding. It stays with us even today.

These discontinuities have so far been arranged and understood in the framework of linear historical development and in conformity with the normative order of industrial production. Accordingly social formations progress from simple to complex, from primitive to modern technologies; from savage to civilized social life, and from irrational to rational and reasonable modes of thinking and codes of conduct.

19.2 A History of the Tribal Voice

There is another way of understanding the tribal situation. They were the first to protest against British encroachment into their life. There were two important consequences of these long years of resistance to pressures from the Hindus and Christians, and from the state to adopt their development programs. A class structure developed within the tribal people. Ghurye’s class differentiation can be read to understand the different responses to the non-tribal world and the State evolved its instruments of governance.

The first class of tribals like the Raj Gonds and others joined mainstream and were assimilated. They got recognized as members of a fairly high status within mainstream society and have had a tendency towards revivalism and preservation. They over time became the tribal elite.

In contrast the third class the Hill sections according to Ghurye exhibited the greatest power of resistance to alien cultures that have pressed upon their border and were marginalized. Today they dwell in deep-forest, and continue to practice shifting cultivation for instance, in Abujmahar in Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, in Koraput and Phulbani in Orissa.

The large mass of second-class tribal peoples, some Hindu and some Christians suffered from development. A majority of them are the middle class with the little or no land. A larger number became poor.

A brief history of the development of State instruments of governance begins when the East India Company established its first factory in 1650-1.¹⁵ A flourishing trade soon developed. Until 1757 the year of the battle of Plassey "India went on receiving silver supplies on an increasing scale (the East India Company's treasure exports in 1750 amounted to £1.10 million) but now these stopped altogether, as the English Company financed its purchases from revenue raised from here..."¹⁶ In 1765 they acquired from the Mughals the right of diwani (revenue collection) in Bengal.¹⁷ Four years later the Bengal famine of 1769-70 "destroyed one third of the population including artisans and cultivators and one third of land was rendered waste. This hurried on the financial crisis of 1772, which led to state interference in the Company's affairs."¹⁸

Warren Hastings came to India (for the second time) in 1772 as Governor General. In 1773, parliament passed Regulating Acts, "which helped the Company avert bankruptcy and a council was formed to assist him."¹⁹ He was to deal with a situation created by "a generation of rapacious Company servants, known as the Clive generation, who in search of quick profits had unabashedly ravaged Bengal and left the once fertile province a confused heap as wild as the chaos itself."²⁰

He developed a cultural policy aimed at "creating an Orientalised service elite competent in Indian languages and responsive to Indian traditions.... not only at the level of social intercourse but also on that of intellectual exchange. That is, Indian culture as the basis of sound Indian Administration as Percival Spear said."²¹ In this year the first contact with the tribal people was also made when "Captain Camac, an officer of the company's army, exchanged turbans with the ruler of Chotanagpur... who acknowledged the suzerainty of the British."²²

This step was taken to lay down a strong cultural-intellectual foundation for governance.²³ It led to the setting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784-1838 and later College Fort William in 1800-1813. The former promoted research in the area of Indology and the latter introduced universal education. The education system created a middle class that was utilized by the British to run the administration. The Asiatic society prepared the ground for research and writing the settlement reports that were the basis for settling tax. The people who benefited were people of the reading and writing tradition- the twice born caste Hindus and the rich Muslims. A large section of the population who were people of the oral tradition-the occupational castes was excluded.

These steps were taken to overcome the crises resulted in formulation of the intellectual-cultural framework for the States to position and interpret the tribal voices that were expressed through their struggles that followed.

After the formulation of the cultural policy, the Pahariyas revolted in 1778 against the "company's attempt at charting postal route, which was viewed

by them as act of encroachment.”²⁴ This was followed by the Koli disturbance (1784-1785), the revolt in Tamar of Chotanagpur (1789-; 1794-1795). To earn revenue the British undertook land and revenue settlements in the form of Permanent Settlement (1793). It transformed subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture for growing cotton and indigo for textile mills in Manchester. There after there were at least forty recorded events of confrontation-acts of minor protest and major revolts- by tribal people in different parts of India until 1857, which was the year of the Great Santhal rebellion in 1857²⁵ and the Indian Mutiny.²⁶

The state responded on the one hand with a separate Santhal district, prohibition of intermediaries between the Santhals and the Government, abolition of the Kamitai bonded labour system...and on the other by formulating the Queens Proclamation of 1858, which granted each community a right to its own culture oblivious of bilingual attributes that is the history of interaction between communities.

It defined non-interference, with regard to cultural differences, as the principle of governance. It was stated,

(i) All people in India shall alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of law; (ii) all subjects of whatever *caste, tribe, race or creed* shall be freely and impartially admitted to offices in British services; (iii) in framing and administering the law, due regard will be paid to the ancient rights, usage and customs of people belonging to different castes, tribes and races in India; and (iv) the British Government will not interfere with the religious belief or worship of any of the British subjects (highlights are my emphasis).²⁷

This was the first political expression of the cultural policy. The underlying social theory on diversity can be read from ‘the 1880s books on India- ‘there is not and never was an India or even a country like India, possessing, according to European ideas any sort of unity, physical, political, social or religious. There were only natural regions that people of these regions should ever think of themselves as Indians, that they should feel they belong to one great nation.” It was further said’ India was a creation of the British imperial power and that it was essentially artificial with its existence dependent on careful exercise of power.²⁸ It laid the framework for a mode of self-determination one that was not possible without State patronage.

Between 1858 and 1935 there were twenty-eight recorded events of confrontation.²⁹ During this period the Forest Act 1858 created reserved forest and forest villages were allowed within the reserved areas. By 1895 several forest villages were established. The acquisition Act 1894 prepared ground for the next stage. The stopping of shifting began in 1890 when “the forest village regulations were issued” (Prasad, 1994). There was compensation for the land taken over by the state- by 1895 the permanence of these villages was sufficiently established to settle them as ryotwari tracts (Prasad 1994:147).

Various orders were passed for ameliorating the conditions of tribals of the East Godavari Agency population were ultimately consolidated in law known as the Agency Tract’s Interest and Land Transfer Act 1917. It formed a model for similar legislation in other tribal areas. The most important feature of this Act was that it restricted transfer of land from tribals to outsiders.³⁰

The need for special protection of aboriginal tribes was not confined to the areas notified by the agencies, and in 1919 an act known as the Government of India Act 1919, provided “that the Governor General in Council may declare any territory in British India to be a ‘Backward Tract’ and that any act of the Indian Legislature should apply to such Backward Tracts only if the Governor-General so directed”. This legislation of 1919 was a forerunner to the

Government of India Act, 1935, and the government of India (excluded and partially excluded areas) order, 1936. “Excluded Areas” were backward regions inhabited by tribal population to which acts of the Dominion legislature or the provincial legislature were to apply only with the governor of the province. The intention of this provision was to prevent the extension of legislation designed for advanced areas to backward areas where primitive tribes may be adversely affected by laws unsuitable to their special condition.³¹ All uprisings were the last resort of tribesmen driven to despair by the encroachment of outsiders on their lands and economic resources.

In the mode of colonial governance illegal extortions and the oppressiveness of corrupt police were the immediate cause of Rampa Rebellion, which started in March 1873 in the East Godavari district.

The most significant ones were the Birsa Munda (1895-1900) and the Tana Bhagat Movement (1913-21). “The amendments made by the government consequent upon the Santhal Rebellion in 1856-57 were not extended to the Mundas, although they were facing similar problems.... The consequent alienation of land dealt a cruel blow to all that the tribals cherished in their life. The Birsa movement aimed at complete independence. The Tana Bhagat movement was anti missionary and anti British.... They sought to rid the tribal people of vices and weaknesses, and they refused to pay rent on the ground that they had cleared the forest and as such were the masters of the land. They demanded self-government, abolition of kingship, no rent payment, perfect equality between man and man.”³²

As a consequence of these movements came into being tribal improvement societies, institutions designed to introduce reform and stimulate development.³³ These movements have been characterized as revivalist-backward looking as it were.³⁴ “The Simon commission and the government sought solution to the tribal problem within the existing political structure. The policies framed were unrealistic... Most funds meant for tribals were cornered by the non-tribals. Thus the government failed to assuage the feelings of the tribals.”³⁵

The government responded with the Government of India Act of 1935, which prepared the legal foundation of the coming to being of the modern State in India and its structure of Governance. In keeping with the spirit of the Queens Proclamation (which as pointed out earlier was in consonance with Warren Hastings Cultural policy) it constituted the excluded and partially excluded areas for forest dwellers and tribals setting them apart from the mainstream.

19.01 Action and Reflection

Discuss the various tribal assertions and the response of the British-India government?

The character of the tribal movement changed under the Government of India Act of 1935 and the first ever elections held in 1936. Pan-tribal organizations emerged to make their voice heard. For instance, the Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha, Chotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha. In 1949 this Mahasabha was wound up and the (Jharkhand Party) new regional party created.³⁶

19.3 Nationalist freedom struggle and tribals

The nationalist freedom struggle was not rooted in the tribal and peasant movements. The Indian National Congress questioned neither the repressive legislation nor the cultural policy. It could not draw upon the heritage of these movements because it had internalised this cultural policy: it did not reject the way tribals were being thought of and talked about, as backward and

primitive people. Nor was any question asked as to whether regulative state control was absolutely necessary. Congress justified protection and criticised exclusion. This, it was observed, later prepared the way for development programmes. It was expected that these would enable the tribal people to absorb the normative order of industrial modernisation.

The Congress clarified its position on the exclusion of forest communities in its 1936 Faizpur Resolution:

“This Congress is of the opinion that the separation of excluded and partially excluded areas is intended to leave out of the larger control, disposition and exploitation of the mineral and forest wealth in those areas and keep their inhabitants apart from India for their career exploitation and suppression.”³⁷

In accordance with the spirit of this exclusion policy it was further stated that,

“.... The *adivasis*’ interest would be best served through their exposure to modern influences (like education) and the implementation of conservation laws. The industrialisation of forest produce may be considered essential for the progress of *adivasi* society.”³⁸

Tribal protest was considered an indication of their inability to adjust, adapt and change. Those who argued for their assimilation subscribed to the norms of mainstream development under the British regime. They were unaware of the contribution the tribal forest dwellers could make to the struggle for freedom and independence. Questions concerning their knowledge and its relation to their way of life were ignored even though they were highlighted by tribal protests.

This was in agreement with what Jawaharlal Nehru thought on the tribal position. He said at the opening of the first session of the ‘Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas’ Conference in 1952:

“For half a century or more we have struggled for freedom and achieved it. That struggle, apart from anything else, was a great liberating force. It raised us above ourselves... We must remember that this experience of hundreds of millions of Indians was not shared by the tribal folk.”³⁹

It is clear that they struggled and protested against British domination but there was no pathway to exchange their experience with other Indians, because on one hand, they were politically marginalised in excluded areas and on the other, they were social outcasts of the so-called dominant societies. They were thus outsiders. The position of the tribals cannot any longer be understood from the standpoint of this mainstream mode of governance.

19.4 Constituent Assembly Debates and Tribal people

The Constituent Assembly debates too did not question the validity of both ‘excluded’ and ‘partially excluded areas’, or the view that tribals were backward. Nor did they draw upon the traditions of tribal and peasant movements to find out their mode of participation in the making of Independent India. They sought to deal with a problem that arises from a situation where cultural pluralism and politico-economic inequality are co-present and co-exist, namely, of social justice in an iniquitous social structure without re-examining the secularist policy of non-interference on questions of social and cultural differences. Article 16(4) and Article 335 were formulated to deal with this problem (this will be discussed later). The debates on this and other related issues were within the theoretical framework of the liberal political tradition of governance left behind by the British.

The constitutional provisions for tribal people were formulated as a part of this debate. It was argued that the principles of political and economic democracy would create appropriate conditions for justice. These were incorporated in the Directive Principles of State Policy. In the discussion on the Directive Principles Dr B.R.Ambedkar said:

As I stated, our Constitution as a piece of mechanism lays down what is parliamentary democracy. By parliamentary democracy we mean 'one man one vote'... The reason why we have established in this Constitution a political democracy is because we do not want to install by any means whatsoever a perpetual dictatorship of any particular body of people. While we have established political democracy, it is also the desire that we should lay down our ideal of economic democracy. We do not want merely to lay down a mechanism to enable people to come and capture power. The Constitution also wishes to lay down an ideal before those who would be forming the government. That ideal is economic democracy, whereby, so far as I am concerned, I understand to mean 'one man one vote'. The question is: Have we got any fixed idea as to how we should bring about economic democracy? There are various ways in which people believe economic democracy can be brought about; there are those who believe in individualism as the best form of economic democracy; there are those who believe in having a socialistic state as the best form of economic democracy; there are those who believe in the communist idea as the most perfect of economic democracy.

Now, having regard to the fact that there are various ways by which economic democracy may be brought about, we have deliberately introduced in the language that we have used, in the directive principles, something which is not fixed or rigid.⁴⁰

One-man one vote is the principle underlying political and economic democracy. A vote, therefore, is an instrument to assert and define the political right to economic equality. This is described in the right to property (Article 300A). Together they determine the economic and the political infrastructure of the industrial production process and the productive capacities for modern industrial work and enterprise. The democratic character of this infrastructure and of the process can be judged from its attitude to other traditions of work: they had no space for the coexistence and enrichment of plural modes of earning a livelihood with which people were familiar. In fact it prescribes its annihilation.

The nature of economy defined by this principle is not based on the work culture and the productive capacities of people. Does this enrich the skills to be productive and ensure a minimum subsistence? This principle thus needs to be recast. Productive capacity is not just the capability to do a job and be employed. It is the preparedness to cope with the traumas of alienation, anomie in the social sphere and with the uncertainties of living in the modern world of free liberal markets, without either subjugating anybody or being subjugated. Such preparedness is the most essential requirement of self-rule. The political and economic dimension of democracy is more than just 'one man one vote'. It is concerned with a condition for such preparedness. To understand their larger meaning we need to consider the link between the political and economic rights and the productive capacity on one hand and the capacity to work and plural ways of life on the other. It is these links that constitute the idea of common good.

Seen from this perspective the directive principles do not resolve the contradiction between Article 16(4) and Article 335. The former Article upholds equality of opportunity for all citizens in an iniquitous social structure where power and goods are concentrated in the hands of a few. The latter supports the claim of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts. Debates on Article 335 focused on whether or not there should be job

reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Some *excerpts* are reproduced here.

Shri Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava: ...There is absolutely no provision for reservation so far as members of the Scheduled Castes And Scheduled Tribes are concerned. The safeguard given by law to this class is contained in article 335 which says: "The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes shall be taken into consideration, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration, in the making of appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State." Therefore, one thing is absolutely clear, that no reservation was meant to be made for the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as such. I remember that in the Sub-Committee of the Minorities Committee, this matter came up and then we decided that there should be no reservations at all. Now, as if by the backdoor, by smuggling, this reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is being inserted in clause (4) of Article 320. My submission is when there is a positive command of the Constitution to the members of the Public Service Commission which they must obey that the claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes must be considered consistently with the maintenance of the efficiency of the administration, this provision would be useless, and also, in a manner, I should say, this takes away the effect of article 335 to an extent. I am, therefore, anxious that so far as the Scheduled Castes and Tribes are concerned, their claims must be considered with regard to all appointments and not only with regard to reserved appointments. Because, if they are reserved, it means that their claim will be considered. The livelihood is that their claims will be confined only to the reserved posts and in regard to other posts, their claims will not be considered.

Now as the House knows, the provision contained in article 16 clause (4) is a sort of a negative provision to counterpoise the equality of opportunity for all citizens, some of whom are very much developed and others not so developed, and provision is made that the State is not prevented from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts. Supposing no posts are reserved, the provision will neither benefit the backward classes nor any other class. When the House has not decided reservation of post, I do not think we are justified in having in this clause (4) a contingency for which reservation could be made. When the House has decided once for all that no reservation is to be made, then these words (clause 4) give rise to the impression that reservation is possible.⁴¹

Shri T.T. Krishnamachari: Will the honourable member please say how article 335 could be implemented?

Shri Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava: Can it only be implemented by reservation? If that is so, why did we not so decide?⁴²

Shri R .K. Sidhva: Mr President, ... I have had the view that if anybody deserves protection or special rights or privileges, it is the Scheduled Castes only ... for the reason that I frequently stated that we have done certain injustice to that class and for the purpose of undoing that injustice, we specially gave them this protection.... I do not approve of my friend Deshmukh's proposal to introduce the words 'backward class', ... I strongly oppose it... Although the words 'backward class' are there, I am obliged to reluctantly accept it, and if I had my way, I would have said that there shall be no such thing as "backward classes."⁴³

Shri Mahavir Tyagi: Why introduce the communal virus into another article... That representation of the Scheduled Castes shall be so and so, the manner of giving it shall be such and such, that the rules of giving this representation in the services or posts to the Scheduled castes shall not be made in

consultation with the Public Service and so on. All this, I say is absolutely unnecessary, and surely it does not benefit the Scheduled Caste people at all. Some of us felt that the special reservation was forced against their wishes. But then we were told that it was only a directive article, and that it directs the policy of future governments.⁴⁴

In these debates the question of protection was addressed without reference to the larger question of the nature of the economy and the place of the marginalized people in it. There was no stocktaking of either the state of the economy that the British rulers left behind or of the reserves of material and cultural capital with the people. For this reason it was not possible to discuss the path of self-reliant development and progress India was to follow. The welfare that the directive principles seek to promote defines individual and collective well being without considering its relation to the work culture and productive capacities of people.

For instance, laws that prevent the alienation of land amongst tribals are not sufficient for economic and political democracy. In addition what is required is the freedom to define land and other means of production in accordance with their tradition of work and in the context of the industrial production system. Accordingly, tribal protest can be seen as an assertion of their right not only to land but also to the universe of the forest as their living space, to their work culture, an important component of which is shifting cultivation, and to their world-view. These rights are a precondition for a sense of belonging, which is most essential for their democratic participation in constructing a future. It is not dependent on whether this mode of cultivation conforms to standards of scientific rationality and development.

The idea of welfare and social justice is premised on the right to property, which cannot ensure a sense of belonging. It is thus of crucial importance to understand the form and content of the notion of political and economic democracy itself. In pursuance of the 'Directive Principles of State Policy' Article 300A says that the State can acquire land to promote public interest:

Persons not to be deprived of property save by authority of law. No Person shall be deprived of his property save by law.

In the 'draft constitution' this was Article 24. In the discussion around this Article the justification and implications of this Article were spelt out:

Shri Jawaharlal Nehru: If property is required for public use it is a well established law that it should be acquired by the State, by compulsion if necessary and compensation is paid and the law has laid down methods of judging that compensation... But more and more today the community has to deal with large schemes of social reform, social engineering etc., which can hardly be considered from the point of view of that individual acquisition of a small bit of land or structure. Difficulties arise — apart from every other difficulty, the question of time. Here is a piece of legislation that the community, as presented in its chosen representatives, considers quite essential for the progress and safety of the State and it is a piece of legislation which affects millions of people. Obviously you cannot leave that piece of legislation too long, widespread and continuous litigation in the courts of law. Otherwise the future of millions may be affected; otherwise the whole structure of the State may be shaken to its foundations.... We are passing through a tremendous age of transition... How are you going to protect the individual? I began by saying that there are two approaches — the approach of the individual and the approach of the community. But how are we to protect the individual today except the few who are strong enough to protect themselves? They have become fewer and fewer. In such a state of affairs, the State has to protect the individual right to property. He may possess property, but it may mean

nothing to him, because some monopoly comes in the way and prevents him from the enjoyment of his property. The subject therefore is not a simple one... because the individual may lose that right completely by the functioning of various forces both in the capitalist direction and in the socialist direction⁴⁵...

Shri Damodar Swarup Seth: It is not clear whether the words "acquisition of property for the public purpose" includes socialisation of land and Industries or compulsory transfer of property from one set of persons to the other. It may well be argued that these words mean acquisition of property only for the general use of Government, local self-governing bodies and other charitable and public institutions and cannot be allowed to be stretched to nationalisation or socialisation. The subject therefore needs clarification, and that clarification in my humble opinion, is not possible unless we discard the idea or I should say the theory, that man has natural rights in property and also the idea that property is a projection of personality. And any invasion on property is an interference with the personality itself... Man has no natural right in property. Claim to property is acquired by law recognised by community. The community... has always reserved to itself the right to modify laws with respect to property and acquire it from its owners in the common, social and economic interest of the people. Property is a social institution and like all other social institutions, it is subject to regulations and claim of common interests.

...The property of the entire people, it must be understood, is the mainstay of the State in the development of national economy and the right to private property cannot be allowed to stand in the way or used to the detriment of the community. The State must have the full right to regulate, limit and expropriate property by means of law in the common interests of the people. The doctrine of compensation as a condition for expropriation cannot be accepted as a Gospel truth. Death duty is a form of partial expropriation without compensation and it forms an essential feature of financial systems of many a progressive country in the world...

It is almost universally recognised that full compensation to the owners of properties will make impossible any large project of social and economic amelioration to be materialised. It is impossible for the State to pay owners of property in all classes and at market value for the property requisitioned or acquired in times of emergency or for the purpose of socialisation of big industries with a view to eliminate exploitation and promoting general economic welfare. Partial compensation is, therefore, suggested... as a *via media* which will neither hinder socialisation nor at the same time will it deprive a large number of persons of means of livelihood.⁴⁶

Prof. T.K.Shah:.... Acquisition of lands for public purpose, acquisition of any form of property, movable or immovable, for any public purpose including the working of that enterprise for the benefit of the public is, I think, an inherent right of the sovereign community which should not be subject to any exception...

I have therefore, suggested that any such property to be acquired can be acquired for public purpose without defining what is exactly meant by 'public purpose' subject to such compensation if any... Not all property is deserving of compensation nor should the Constitution recognise categorically without qualification or modification the right to compensation as appears to be the case⁴⁷...

The congress did not question the way tribals were being talked about, as backward and primitive, neither was any question asked as to whether regulative state control was absolutely necessary and whether 'excluded' areas was the way to do so? The debate got involved with justifying or criticizing exclusion,

having lost sight of the fact ‘exclusion was a consequence of protest against British rule.

‘Exclusion’ was an expression of a social and cultural attitude towards people who lived in a forest. Those who argued for assimilation either upheld the norms of mainstream development under colonial regime and they were unaware of the forest-dwellers contribution to the struggle for freedom and independence.

19.02 Action and Reflection

Bring out the salient features of the constituent assembly debates on tribal affairs.

Today there are three positions left, center and the right. All are agreed that as forest dwellers, a people living in a state of nature, tribal people had no future. The difference between them was with regards to the process of becoming a part of the mainstream and their place and position in it. Correspondingly their definitions of the key terms differ.

19.5 Conclusion

Today all tribal people are not forest dwellers. They are a microcosm of the macrocosm that is India. DD Kosambi has described the larger social context in which the tribal people are located in India. “Cultural differences between Indians even in the same province, district or city are as wide as the physical differences between various parts of the country. Modern India produced an outstanding figure of world literature in Tagore. Within easy reach of Tagore’s final residence may be found other illiterate primitive peoples still unaware of Tagore’s existence. *Some of them are hardly out of the food-gathering stage.* (Emphasis mine) An imposing modern city building such as a bank, government office, factories or scientific institute may have been designed by some European architect or by his Indian pupil. The wretched workmen, who actually built it generally, use the crudest tools... The very idea of science (*the dominant one*) is beyond the mental reach of human beings who have lived in misery on the margin of over cultivated lands or in the forest. Most of them have been driven by famine conditions in the jungle to become the cheapest form of drudge labour in city.”⁴⁸

Protection under the fifth and sixth schedules seeks to safeguard forest-dwellers rights as citizens of India. The totality of rights that individual-citizen derive from the description of sovereignty of the Indian-Nation-State. These derive substance from the land acquisition Act of 1894. The rights of citizen cannot transgress the rights that the Sovereign state has over the citizen. In other words the powers to direct its social and cultural rights make the state sovereign and an individual its citizen.

The act 1894 prevents/stands in the way of creations appropriate condition. For instance, land acquired under this was most cases people ‘commons’. In the way cultural rights are annulled for the commons are not only replemishable reservoirs of materials necessary for subsistence, they are also inscribed with a set of ‘meanings’ which replenish the processes of social and cultural reproduction. Sacred groves, grazing grounds, waterways, rivers, hills, are some instances of such ‘commons’. A question arises here! What cultural rights remain when the right to commons is always under threat of being annulled? And what is the significance of these ‘remaining cultural rights for the political rights? This is described in the constitution under articles on ‘Fundamental Rights’: These are derived from the way the Indian nation-state is defined article/this definition provides legitimacy to the act 1894 and this act in turns executes one aspect of this definition-namely territorial unity and

sovereignty over the geographical area which is also the territory over which the state has its jurisdiction. In other words this act shows the character uniformly. That is it allows differences only in so far as it does not undermine uniformity.

The land acquisition Act of 1894 is crucial. While on the one hand the act is premised on a notion of good defined as public interest, on the other hand it is itself the premise of a particular interpretation of Nation-State and of who is a citizen.

According to the Eight Report of the "standing committee on Urban and Rural Development (1994-95) of the Tenth Lok Sabha on land Acquisition Act, 1894, "For the acquisition of land needed for public purpose, developmental work and public institutions and for determining the amount of compensation to be made on account of acquisition the first land Acquisition Act was promulgated on the first day of March, 1894'. However, it has been amended from time to time to suit the needs of post-independence era. It extends to the whole of India except the state of Jammu and Kashmir. While in Nagaland the assembly has not adopted it for its empowerment in the state."

The land acquisition Act requires him to sacrifice land for the sake of the well-being of the collective. Accordingly 'territoriality' which is what makes the Nation-State is to be understood as that area (has) protected by the state machinery over which the State has sovereign rights' in the name of public good, and the State's exercise of this right is sanctioned by the 'land acquisition of 1894.' In other words a citizen is one from whom land can be taken and to whom land can be given. This is an obligation and a duty of being born within the boundaries of nation-state.

The 1894 land Acquisition Act created a political environment that transformed the cultural and social processes of acculturation of forest-dwellers, into a political arena. This act is of crucial importance for defining the Nation-State as a territorial unit. Accordingly, a Nation-State covers contiguous geographical area over which it has control. Within this territory the government has the right to take any land for the sake of public interest, provided it gives equivalent compensation (in lands). The declaration of areas inhabited by forest-dwellers as 'protected Areas', the declaration that all forest that does not yield revenue as Wasteland, and the promotion of permanent settlement by encourage plough settled cultivation in place of shifting cultivation are instances of political activities encouraged by the 1894 land acquisition Act.

A more telling example of the conflict of the political and the cultural is the land Acquisition of 1894. Public interest which this act seeks to uphold is defined very clearly in schedule of the constitution. The land acquired for activities listed in this schedule have more often than not been commons or common property for a particular commonly or a group of people. Here, there are two nations of 'good'- one defined by the state and the other defined by the commonly- the identity of a 'nation state' is premised on sacrifice of cultural rights of commonly, for the sake of constitution a political entity-the nation state. However from the standpoint of commonly rights in commons, it can be argued that the political identity of a nation-state stand firm provided commons and community right/cultural rights are strengthened and diversified. Historical experience has shown that the list of activities, in fact have done more harm than good to people at large. In the light of this experience it can be argued that the identity of Nation-State which is expressed through the land acquisition Act 1894 and which, this act seeks to strengthen, in fact produces results to the contrary: it corrodes the ground on which a Nation-State stands-this ground is its people, their culture and their community.

It is therefore, necessary to reexamine the act 1894 such that it becomes possible to create conditions for the political and cultural nation of good to define complimentary political and cultural rights. On way is to see that cultural rights become the basis for political rights. So far political 'right' has determined cultural rights. This is a necessary condition for 'self-rule'.

The unfolding of these assumptions and implications of the 1894 act took place right through the Nationalist struggle, through the constituent assembly debates up to the present times right through this unfolding the cultural notion of good was subservient to the political notion. Power is a function of meaningfulness; ideas are meaningful only when they generate a sense of certitude.

Box 19.2: Understanding forest dwellers vis-à-vis mainstream

The position of forest-dwellers cannot be understood with reference to the mainstream any longer. Accordingly, the question of a uniform civil code needs to be replaced with a notion of civil society. The assumptions of this suggestion are: so far the idea of a uniform civil code has been derived from contrast between the mainstream and the forest-dwellers and that a uniform civil code does not constitute a civil society; on the contrary it promotes the normative order of the mainstream.

To demonstrate the ground assumptions it will suffice to say that in article of the constitution of India, tribes are not even mentioned in the list of peoples of India; they are clubbed as 'minorities. Further Articles 25, 30(i), 25(2) read in this sequence suggests: "All minorities whether based on religion or language shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice [Art 30 (i)]". However, on the one hand nothing prevents the state from regulating or restricting any economic, financial or other secular activity, which may be associated with religious practices [Art 25(2)]. On the other hand the state would provide for "social welfare and reform and throw open Hindu religious institutions of public interest to all classes and sections [art 252(b)]."

In other words, the Hindu religion is unquestioned; it serves public interest in the same way as acquisition of land by state serves public interest. It is therefore, the norm that promotes public interest and is therefore the duty of the state to make it uniformly accessible. From here derives the content of the uniform civil code. In criticism of the tendency of this civil code towards Hindu normative order, it may be said that it partakes of the colonial asymmetry between the cultural and the political aspect of right; that for these reasons it overlooks the relation between religion and a work culture and that instead of facilitating a process of exchange and cooperation to generate civil society where a plurality of cultural and social traditions are coextensive with political and economic inequality on the contrary it accentuates differences and generates conditions of violence and terror in social lives of people.

The problem is: what social arrangements enable the emergence of such cultural norms that would promote cooperation and exchange amongst people who, by the logics of the social positions they occupy, are torn apart by conflicting forces that emanate from cultural and social differences in a politically and an economically unequal world. Such social arrangements are an important part of the structure of civil society.

19.6 Further Reading

Furer-Haimendorf, Christoph. 1992. *Tribes of India-The Struggle for Survival*. Delhi: Oxford University Press,1992.

Ghurye, G S. 1963. *The Scheduled Tribes*, 3rd edition (First Published as 'The Aborigines so-called and their Future' 1943). Bombay: Popular Press.

Vashum, R. 2005 (2000). *Nagas' Right to Self-determination: An Anthropological-Historical Perspective*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications (2nd Edition).

End Notes

1 For details see Moonis Raza and Aijazuddin Ahmad. 1990. An Atlas of Tribal India. New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company.

2 In as many as 92 districts, more than 95 per cent of the tribal workers are engaged in primary economic activities such as cultivation, agricultural labour, fishing, hunting and other allied activities and mining and quarrying. They form a contiguous cluster over the mid-Indian tribal belt. This region includes 11 districts each in Rajasthan and Maharashtra, 28 adjoining districts in Madhya Pradesh, 6 districts each in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, 3 districts in West Bengal and 1 in Orissa. (Moonis Raza 1990: 381-82)

3 The linguistic regions can be divided as follows: The Austro-Asiatic Family Region has two divisions, the Mon-Khmer and the Munda. The Tibeto-Chinese has two divisions, the Tibeto-Himalayan and the Tibeto-Burmese. The third is the Dravidian family region. The Fourth is the Dravido-Munda region. The fifth is the Indo-Aryan region and the sixth is the Aryo-Dravidian region. (Moonis Raza 1990:40-42)

4 Moonis Raza 1990:226.

5 Elwin: Loss of Nerve (0).

6 G S Ghurye. The Scheduled Tribes 3rd edition (First Published as The Aborigines so-called and their Future 1943). Popular Press, Bombay 1963 (p173)

7 G S Ghurye. The Scheduled Tribes 3rd edition (First Published as The Aborigines so-called and their Future 1943). Popular Press, Bombay 1963 (p 24)

8 G S Ghurye. The Scheduled Tribes 3rd edition (First Published as The Aborigines so-called and their Future 1943). Popular Press, Bombay 1963 (p 23)

9 Archana Prasad Against Ecological Romanticism-Verrier Elwin and the Making of Anti-Modern Tribal Identity, Delhi Three Essays Collective 2003 (p 91-92)

10 (Ghurye 1944 Aborigines-so called and their future).

11 Does the Bhuria Committee report address the life-situation of forest tribal forest dwellers? The Bhuria Committee Report seeks to argue that the extension of the Panchayati Raj Act 1992 (the 73rd amendment of the Indian Constitution) to tribal scheduled areas will strengthen the ground for and promote self-rule. The question here is not whether the 73rd amendment (Panchayati Raj Act 1992) can with suitable modifications as suggested by the Bhuria Committee, create appropriate and adequate conditions for the promotion of self-government and self-rule amongst tribal forest dwellers in various parts of India. The more important question is whether the Constitutional framework, which Bhuria Committee calls to attention is, appropriate and adequate for this purpose under the changed conditions of their life.

The report suggests that the following principles be used to extend the 73rd Amendment to scheduled areas

- a) "Traditional tribal conventions and laws should continue to hold validity. Harmonisation with modern systems should be consistent herewith. The committee felt that while shaping the new Panchayati Raj structure in tribal areas it is desirable to blend the traditional with the modern by treating the traditional institutions as the foundation on which the modern superstructure should be built [Report: p 6 (13.1)]".

An example of this blending according to the report is as follows:

- b) "The land acquisition Act 1894 is premised on unrealistic ground. The basic lacunae in the Act have to be removed. the consent of the local village community should be obligatory. The rehabilitation package should be operated with the consent of the local village community.[Report: p9(v)]".
- c) "The Gram Sabha should exercise different functions as traditionally prescribed. More specifically management of land, forest, water, air ..etc., . resources should be vested in it. This right should be deemed as axiomatic, in the functioning of Gram Panchayats [Report: p8 (21.ii)]".

This Report on the one hand seeks to give Gram Sabha axiomatic rights over natural resources and on the other hand it allows for displacement of tribal people by not questioning the land Acquisition Act of 1894. This contradiction shows that the participation of tribal people sought through giving powers to Gram Sabha is rhetorical, meaningless and without any substance. The variety of functions and powers described by the Report will lead to more bureaucratisation. This, historical experience has shown will only accentuate their marginalized position. It also draws attention to the larger political framework of a Nation-State which legitimises this Report. The act 1894 operationalises one aspect of this framework, namely, territoriality and sovereignty. This will be examined in a separate section of this essay.

The 'tradition' being referred to, is neither clearly defined nor is it described. Several studies have shown the deforestation, impoverishment and acculturations define the social context of forest-dwellers. A comparison of their life situation when the Constituent Assembly framed the constitution with what it is now shows clearly that forest-dwellers traditions of work have increasingly come under pressure of modernization: on the one hand there is deforestation, a politically centralized industrial production process which speedily depletes natural endowments and in the process undermines their access to nature and on the other hand there is sanskritization and westernization which depletes the social and cultural capital.

12 Claude Levi-Strauss. 1977. Structural Anthropology Vol II. Translated from French by Monique Layton. Great Britain: Allen Lane. (p313)

13 J P S Uberoi. 1978. Science and Culture. Delhi: Oxford University Press

14 A.R Radcliffe-Brown. 1958. Method in Social Anthropology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.(p 39-41)

15 Vincent Smith. The Oxford History of India 4th ed Edited by Percival Spear. Delhi, Oxford University Press 1981(12th impression) (p465).

16 Shireen Moosvi , The India Economic Experience 1600-1900: A Quantitative Study. In K N Pannikar, Terence J Byres and Utsa Patnaik ed Making of History Essays Presented to Irfan Habib. Delhi, Tulika, 2000 (p343).

17 Romila Thapar and Majid Hayat Siddiqi, Chotanagpur: The Pre-colonial and the colonial Situation. In R D Munda and Sanjay Bosu Mullick. Jharkhand Movement-Indigenous Peoples Struggle for Autonomy in India, IWGIA Document No. 108. Copenhagen, 2003 (p 44).

18 Vincent Smith. The Oxford History of India 4th ed Edited by Percival Spear. Delhi, Oxford University Press 1981(12th impression) (p502).

19 David Kopf. British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance-The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835. Berkeley, University Press, 1969 (p 16).

20 David Kopf. British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance-The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835. Berkeley, University Press, 1969 (p 13).

21 David Kopf. British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance-The Dynamics of Indian Modernization 1773-1835. Berkeley, University Press, 1969 (p 17).

22 Romila Thapar and Majid Hayat Siddiqi. Chota nagpur: The Pre-colonial and the colonial Situation. In R D Munda and Sanjay Bosu Mullick. Jharkhand Movement-Indigenous Peoples Struggle for Autonomy in India, IWGIA Document No. 108. Copenhagen, 2003 (p 44).

23 The steps taken to over come these problems drew upon British orientalism, utilitarianism and enlightenment social theory.

24 Shachi Arya.Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p -138).

25 Shachi Arya.Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 137-167; 216).

26 Shachi Arya.Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 151-152).

27 (quoted in Mehta 1991: 73).

28 (John Stracthey. India London 1888 in Embree 1989:9-13) Another expression of the idea was "the cause of the innumerable political Sub divisions which characterized the history of the subcontinent before the unification brought about by the British power was obviously the variety of races, languages, religions manners and customs only rarely had a paramount power ever seceded in creating political unity and then only for a few years 'when no such power existed, the states, hundreds in member might be likened to a Swarm of free, mutually repellant molecules in a state of incessant movement. How could such bewildering diversity movement be made intelligible as a history of India, rather them as histories of ephemeral regional principalities (Embree 1989:11)"

29 Shachi Arya.Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 216).

30 (Furer-Haimendosf 1992:38-39)

31 Furer-Haimendorf, 1992:39

32 Shachi Arya.Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 144-146)

- 33 Shachi Arya. Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 150)
- 34 Shachi Arya. Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 149).
- 35 Shachi Arya. Tribal Activism-Voices of Protest. Rawat Publications. Jaipur and New Delhi, 1998 (p 151)
- 36 K S Singh. Tribal Autonomy Movements in Chotanagpur in R D & S Bosu Mullick. The Jharkhand Movement-Indigenous Peoples' Struggle for Autonomy in India, .IWIGIA Document No. 108, Copenhagen 2003 (p 91)
- 37 Prasad 1994: 249-250.
- 38 Prasad 1994 250-251.
- 39 (Prasad 1994: 256-257)
- 40 CAD Vol VII 19 Nov 1948: 494.
- 41 CAD Vol X 14 Nov. 1949: 495.
- 42 CAD: ibid 496.
- 43 CAD: ibid 498.
- 44 CAD: ibid 499.
- 45 CAD Vol. IX 10 Sept 1949: 1192, 1194-95.
- 46 CAD Vol IX 10 Sept 1949: 1200.
- 47 CAD ibid 1218.
- 48 Kosambi 1986:2.

Unit 20

Social Differentiation among Tribes

Contents

- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Definition of social differentiation
- 20.3 Types of social differentiation
- 20.4 Social differentiation among tribes
- 20.5 Conclusion
- 20.6 Further reading

Learning objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Concept of social differentiation;
- Definition of social differentiation;
- Types of social differentiation;
- Social differentiation among tribes with special reference to India;
- Various principles and bases of social differentiation, such as kinship and descent, sex, age, rank and hierarchy, occupation, education, religion, language, among others.

20.1 Introduction

All human beings, in the course of its social processes and historical destiny, have always been associated and identified with one (basic) group or another- voluntarily or involuntarily. The combined influences of the individuals shape the nature and type of the group in which they live. At the same time, the group so formed, shape the total behaviour of the individual members. This is how we find various types of individual personalities and groups that differ from one another. We also find range of groups from simple egalitarian societies to highly stratified and complex societies. Yet even among the egalitarian societies, we still observe elements of role differentiation and stratifications. All this differentiation is what we generally call 'social differentiation'. The process of social differentiation generally occurs when inherited and socially acquired personal differences come to be used as the basis for accomplishing social tasks and filling social positions.

Social differentiation is a broad concept. It is a pervasive process too. The outcome of social differentiation can be seen in two main ways- as 'the complex of roles (and associated statuses) comprising a society's institutions' and as 'the complex of roles intersecting the institutions' (Stebbins, 1987). Some of these roles are division of labour, social stratification, sex, gender, age, and ethnicity. These roles operate both at the core as well as at the periphery of the institutions. The differentiated roles may be *ascribed* or *achieved*.

The ascribed roles are gained or inherited from birth or at certain age. The roles of sex, age, race, nationality, majority and age are examples of ascribed roles. The achieved roles are those which are earned by a person or a group in the course of one's life or period. Examples of achieved roles would among others include power, gender, social class and occupation. For instance, individuals earn the role of a feminist, a Prime Minister, rich man or woman.

Social differentiation is among others closely related to the concepts of division of labour and social stratification. But they are not the same concept either. Therefore, the differences of these concepts merit brief statement for due clarity. Social differentiation is a broader concept than the division of labour as generally understood in modern sociology. In the analysis of social division of labour, the focus is thrust on the group and organisational functions of the society. Whereas, the analysis of social differentiation would include even the aspects of cross—institutional roles such as deviance, age, and community status *inter alia*.

Again, social differentiation may be distinguished from social stratification by defining the latter as a hierarchical system in which social inequalities are institutionalized, and are generally passed down from generation to generation. Social stratification models look at people's opportunities in life and their relationship with one another which are largely based on class, gender, ethnicity, race, occupation, age, prestige, power, religion, polity, location and so on. However, the concept of social differentiation is considered as a broader term than social stratification.

20.2 Definition of Social Differentiation

Social differentiation has been defined in many ways by different scholars. We shall first of all acquaint with some of the definitions. According to Eisenstadt, social differentiation is “the situation that exists in every social unit, large or small, by virtue of the fact that people with different characteristics perform different tasks and occupy different roles...(which tasks and roles) are closely interrelated in several ways.”

Ritzer *et al* (1979) defines social differentiation as a “hierarchical system in which inherited and socially acquired personal differences come to be the basis for accomplishing social tasks and filling social positions... (which process) is a precursor to social inequality and social stratification.”

Stebbins (1987) defines social differentiation as a “broad social process in which people are distinguished from one another according to age, sex, deviant, ethnic, and social stratification roles.”

Sorokin (1962; 1972) defines social differentiation in terms of two broad basic categories, namely, *intragroup differentiation* (differentiation within a group) and *intergroup differentiation* (differentiation between and among two or more groups). According to him, intragroup differentiation is manifested in the nature of division of the group into sub-groups that perform different functions in the group. The division of labour in a family between husband and wife is an example of intragroup differentiation. When the sub-groups are ranked as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ or ‘superior’ and ‘inferior’, then the intragroup are said to be stratified. Intergroup differentiation on the other hand, is a broader concept that exemplifies differentiation of social groups or social systems. These groups would include smaller social groups such as high school football clubs and large social groups such as world religious organizations.

Herbert Spencer (1967) feels that in the process of the growth of a society from relatively simpler to more complex societies, the individual components become differentiated but are mutually interdependent. On the functional principle of the process of social differentiation, Spencer (1967:8) opines:

“As [society] grows, its parts become unlike: it exhibits increase of structure. The unlike parts simultaneously assume activities of unlike kinds. These activities are not simply different, but the differences are so related as to make one another possible. The reciprocal aid thus given, causes mutual dependence of the parts. And the mutually dependent parts, living by and for another, form

an aggregate constituted on the same general principle as is an individual organism.”

20.3 Types of social differentiation

Social differentiation has been classified into many different ways. Here, we shall consider a few classifications as found in sociological literature. Durkheim's conception of 'division of labour' in the society is a kind of social differentiation. He explains this phenomenon with the nature of solidarity that exists in the society. He classifies two kinds of solidarity among the members of the society, namely, *mechanical solidarity* and *organic solidarity*. By 'mechanical solidarity', is meant, the phenomenon generally observed in the smaller and non-literate societies characterized by homogeneity of values, beliefs and behaviour, loyalty to tradition and kinship, simple division of labour and roles, little specialization of functions and little tolerance of individuality. 'Organic solidarity' on the other hand is a kind of societal solidarity which is found in modern industrial society, wherein unity is based on complex division of labour, cooperation, and highly specialized roles and functions. This kind of solidarity is called 'organic solidarity' because of its similarity to the functional unity of a biological organism.

Svalastoga (1988) identifies four major forms. They are: (1) Functional differentiation or division of labour; (2) Rank differentiation; (3) Custom differentiation; and (4) Competitive differentiation. According to Svalastoga, functional differentiation exists to the extent that people perform different jobs or occupations. Rank differentiation exists in the society due to differential distribution of scarce and desired goods and services, status, prestige, power etc. He opines that the fundamental character of systematic rank differentiation is implied by its presence in all known human societies and in a wide range of animal societies as well. By custom differentiation is meant the outcome brought about by given situation where rules for proper behaviour differ from one another. Competitive differentiation exists to the extent that the success of one individual or group causes the failure of others.

Sorokin's (1962; 1972) classification of social differentiation is said to be one of the most comprehensive classifications. He classifies social differentiation into 'unibonded' and 'multibonded' groups. In the following, we shall consider his classification to have a fair view of the scope of discourse of social differentiation.

20.4 Sorokin's classification of social differentiation

Sorokin's classification of social differentiation may be presented in a simplified form as the following. Sorokin classifies social differentiation into two broad categories based on the nature of its bonding and differentiations, namely, *Unibonded groups* and *Multibonded groups*.

1) *Unibonded groups*

Unibonded groups are those whose members are bound into a solidary system by one main value or interest. They are mainly of two kinds-

- a) Groups organised (semiorganised, or as if organised) around biosocial values, such as,
 - (1) race; (2) sex; (3) age.
- b) Groups organised (semiorganised, or as if organised) around specified socio-cultural values, namely,
 - 1) kinship groups;
 - 2) groups, such as neighbourhoods, based on territorial propinquity;

- 3) national and ethnic groups, based on community of language, culture, and history;
- 4) state (that is, governmental) groups;
- 5) occupational groups;
- 6) economic groups;
- 7) religious groups;
- 8) political groups;
- 9) ideological and cultural groups (science, philosophy, the fine arts, ethics, education, sport, and so on);
- 10) a nominal group consisting of the elite (individual man and woman of genius, eminent leaders, and historical personages).

I) Multibonded groups

These groups are formed by the amalgamation of two or more unbonded values:

- a) The main types of family formations (embracing all families of the same type);
- b) clans and tribes;
- c) nations;
- d) castes;
- e) social orders ("estates");
- f) social classes.

20.1 Action and Reflection

Discuss Sorokin's classification of social differentiation.

20.4 Social differentiation among tribes

Social differentiation among tribes is mainly based on descent groups, sex, and age. The pattern of social differentiation among tribes is not the same for all societies (tribes). There are variations of social differentiation from tribe to tribe in accordance with their social system, tradition and belief systems. A matrilineal society depicts different system than those of the systems and practices in the patrilineal and patriarchal societies. Again, there are also variations in the mode of differentiation within both the matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Therefore, while considering social differentiation among tribes, it does not imply a uniform pattern. In the following, we shall discuss a few forms of social differentiation among tribes, with special reference to India.

20.4.1 Social Differentiation by Kinship and Descent Groups

Kinship and descent groups are most basic and important bases of social differentiation among tribal societies. The status of a person, its rights and duties is largely determined by the rules of the systems of kinship and descent. The phenomenon can also be understood in terms of *ascribed roles and statuses*. This sense of ascribed roles and statuses is very much relevant to the traditional lives of the tribals.

Kinship refers to those that are related by blood or by marriage. In the words of Rivers (1914), kinship is 'a social recognition of biological ties'. The members who are related by birth or blood are known as *consanguineal relatives* (one's/ ego's *cognates*), while members related through marriage are known as *affinal*

relatives (one's/ego's *affines*). Kinship systems help people to distinguish between different categories of kin, their rights and obligations and for organizing themselves as social groups or kin groups. *Descent* is a narrower term that refers to the rules of a culture that establishes affiliations with one's parents. Descent groups are social groups of relatives whose members/ descendants are related lineally through a common ancestor. In the other words, the status of a person is, by and large, determined by genealogical relationships. The members of a primary social group are linked by kinship.

Kinship system may be broadly classified into two categories- *classificatory* and *descriptive* (after Morgan, 1871). Classificatory system of kinship is a system of describing kinsmen by a terminology that has more than one meaning and for a varying degree of relationship. For example, the use of the terminology, such as, 'father', 'mother', 'brother', 'sister' for many people outside one's own immediate family. Descriptive system, on the other hand, is a system where specific terms/terminologies are used for specific relationships. For instance, the terms 'father', 'mother', 'brother' and 'sister' that is used for one's immediate family members only.

Descent groups may be two main types- unilineal descent group and cognatic (or non-unilineal) descent group. Unilineal descent refers to the type of group where ancestry is traced through either the father's line or mother's line. The unilineal groups where the ancestry is traced through the father's line are called *patrilineal descent* groups, while, those whose ancestry is traced through the mother's line is called *matrilineal descent* groups. Unilineal descent groups are classified into four further types: *lineages*, *clans*, *phratries*, and *moieties*. In terms of magnitude, the four types may be arranged in ascending order, as, lineages – clans – phratries – moieties.

A *lineage* refers to a unilineal descent group which traces ancestry upto about ten successive generations. Lineages may be of two types- patrilineages (descent traced through male line) and matrilineages (descent traced through female line). In some societies, lineages have segments (sub-divisions) and sub-segments and sub-sub segments. A clan is a unilineal descent group which usually consists of ten or more generations. The members of a clan believe that they are descendants of a common ancestor. In certain tribal societies, we do have clans consisting of two or more lineages.

A *phratry* comprises of two or more clans. In India, phratry is more commonly found among the tribes of North-Eastern Himalayan region and also in central region. The Ao Nagas, the Raj Konds and Murias are some of the tribes that have phratry system.

Box 20.1: Models of social differentiation in India

There is no agreement on the nature of the form of social differentiation in India. This is due to the various forms of tribal social formations in India. However, there are some forms that are most prevalent among the tribal societies in India. The following prevalent models put forward by different anthropologists (as reviewed by Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) are reproduced below (*italics mine*).

It has been suggested by T.C.Das (1953) that tribal organization in India reveals seven types. He bases this classification on the difference in the types of spheres or units. The seven types may be illustrated as under:

- 1) Family — Local Group – Tribe
- 2) Families – Clans – Tribe
- 3) Families – Moieties – Tribe
- 4) Families – Clans – Phratries – Tribe
- 5) Families – Clans – Phratries – Moieties – Tribe

6) Families – Clans – Sub-tribe – Tribe

7) Families – Sub-clans – Orthogamous Clans or Selected Clans – Tribe.

But Dube (1971) opines that in India tribal design consists of family, then clan, phratry and finally tribe. The minimum sphere for an Indian tribal design will include in itself four spheres, i.e., individual forming families, families forming clan or local group and clans forming the tribe.

A *moiety* (French, *moitie*, 'half') consists of two unilineal descent groups. The Moyon Nagas of Manipur for instance has this kind of moiety system. It is also known as 'dual organisation'. They may be exogamous, agamous, or endogamous. The practice is found among many Indian tribes, such as the Todas of Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, the Nagas (Ao, Anal, Moyon and Monsang, etc.) of North East region, the Tharus of Central Himalayan region, and the Bondos of Eastern region (in Orissa). Among the Anal Nagas, the society/tribe is divided into two exogamous divisions (moieties)- *mochal* and *moshum*. The members belonging to the same moiety group cannot intermarry. They do have phratries within each moiety. The agamous kind of moiety is found among the Ao Nagas. The two moieties of the Ao tribe- *mongsen* and *chungli* are further divided into several clans. In the level of the clan, there is a system of exogamy.

20.4.2 Social Differentiation by Sex

The most elementary basis for social classification is based on the biological division of human beings into male and female. Every society has some form of division of roles based on sex. A woman is generally expected to engage most of her labour and time in domestic affairs. This is mainly so for the fact that women bear and suckle children and nurture them. As we observe in many societies, women are generally expected to perform lighter works while leaving the heavier works to men (males), as men is considered to be physically stronger than women. However, some of these observations could be wrong for some societies where women even outdo men in performing heavy duties, while men would remain as consumers and dependents of women in many areas of existence.

In subsistence agricultural societies where people get their food and other needs by their labour from their immediate environment, women have a large share of the work of agriculture and domestic roles. Women rear children and nurture them; perform household chores, such as cooking and serving them to the family members, bounding of paddy, etc.; collect water and firewood; carry out clearing and tilling of land/ground; plant saplings and weed them; harvest and carry the produce to their granaries. She is also engaged in growing vegetables and crops, usually in the nearby house and courtyards. Some women also sell their horticultural and agricultural produce in the nearby market or in the village markets. Thus, a woman is found to engage all the time in one work or the other throughout the day and through out the year. The workload is hectic indeed.

Men are expected to perform heavier works which is generally outside home, such as warfare, hunting, fishing, and herding cattle. Nearer home, he is also engaged in many roles such as cutting firewood, ploughing agricultural field, clearing jungle for *jhum* (*swidden*) cultivation (in many societies), and doing irrigation canals. Men are also engaged in carpentry works, trade and commerce. At home, men carry out *jural* authority that concerns with rights and obligations. Men are the policy and law-makers in the village. They are also decision makers of the village. This tradition also percolates down to the level of the family where husbands exercise authority in the family and is expected to be the decision makers of the family. Men also run the administration of the village. A woman by virtue of her sex is not supposed to be part of the village council or administration.

The roles of men and women also overlap in many areas of labour. For example, women also do fishing in river. They also engage in clearing of jungle for jhum cultivation. Women also participate in doing irrigation canals. Likewise, men also carry firewood and participate in plantation and harvest.

Apart from such social differentiations, we also observe in many tribal societies segregation of members on the basis of sex. For instance, among the Tangkhul Nagas (located in North Eastern India and North Western Myanmar), there is a tradition of youth dormitory systems for boys and girls known as *mayarlong* (boys' dormitory) and *shanaolong* (girls' dormitory).

20.4.3 Social Differentiation by Age

All societies have some division of its population on the basis of age. This is due to the fact that every individual does not have the same physical and mental strength and maturity at a given point of time. There are phases of human development, viz., from childhood to adulthood, and again to old-age phase. A child will not be able to perform what is expected of an adult member. In the same way, an old-aged person does not have the needed physical strength to carry out the tasks that is expected of an adult member. In this sense, one finds, the idea of dependency of the child and the aged members on the adult members.

Among the tribes, by and large, there is a process of the phases of life. A child has to undergo certain rituals to enter into the next stage of life, viz., adulthood stage. The ritual basically means for formal recognition of the boys and girls by the community for taking up the role of an adult according to the customs and tradition of the society. Such ritual is generally known as '*rite of passage*' or '*rite de passage*'. We have finest cases of age group differentiations among the Nagas. In Box 1.2 supplied, we shall see age and sex based grouping ('dormitory system') among the Nagas. There are almost similar systems found among other Indian tribes as well (not to be discussed here).

Box 20.2: Naga dormitory system

The Naga dormitory system is a traditional learning institution based on age and sex. There are two dormitories – *boys' dormitory*, and *Girls' dormitory*. But in general, we find only one dormitory system that combines of both the systems. To be part/member of the system, a person has to fulfill certain age criteria. Among the Tangkhul Nagas, the system is called *long* (boys' dormitory, *mayarlong*; girls' dormitory, *shanaolong*). The Ao Nagas called them *arichu*. In the following we shall consider the age grouping system and the arichu system of the Ao Nagas.

The Ao Nagas had a tradition where a young child (especially male child) has to go through certain processes for attaining adulthood (manhood). A boy who has attained about 15 years is entitled to be registered in the traditional *arichu* system. Prior to the entry into the system, a boy is expected to have learned basic knowledge from his parents and grand parents. Generally, there are five to seven age groups or stages.

Tzuir is the first stage of the arichu system. This is the stage of physical test with rigorous training for the new entrants. *Tenapang Yhanga* age group (viz., blooming age) is the second stage. Their main duty is to teach the younger members. Most members marry at this stage. *Tekumchet Yhanga* or *Tepui Zunga* (*tepui*, 'escaped from certain compulsion') is the third stage where the members become the masters of the organization. They are exempt from hard work and punishment. *Juzen* or *Chuzen* (matured stage) age group comprises of the senior members. They take care of the overall situation of the arichu system. *Pener* or *Bencha* age group (old age group) is the last stage of the system. From this stage, a member can enter into the affairs of village administration. A man who leaves the arichu is considered to be equipped with and capable enough of shouldering any given responsibility that an average Ao man is expected of.

[Refer: *Imchen*, 1993; *Vashum*, 2000]

In many societies, 'marriage' during adulthood stage is another important phase of life. A married person is expected among others by the society to perform certain roles and expectations that are not obligatory or entitled to his age group members who are unmarried. Among the Nagas, a person becomes eligible for a membership in the village council by virtue of his marriage.

20.4.4 Social Differentiation by Rank and Hierarchy

In tribal world, there are practices of recognising certain members and/or families by way of heredity. They are ascribed status on the basis of descent. This concept of differentiation is known as 'rank' system or 'ranking' system. The notion refers to a kind of hierarchy in the society where certain lines of descent are considered as superior to others, and are entitled certain respects, status, and privileges.

In many societies, members of the higher rank are regarded as 'royal' families and those in the lower rank are commoners. But there may be still hierarchical order even among the commoners. Among the Nagas, by and large, the chief of the village was regarded as having the highest status. He is also entitled with certain privileges apart from being the head of the village, such as, free and voluntary service of the villagers to help in cultivation of agriculture or construction of residential house from time to time. Again, even among the families of a clan or phratry, there are rankings of family on the basis of seniority of the descendants (male descendants). The Konyak Nagas is an apt example of social ranking system. Such kind of ranking is also found among the Bhutias and Tharus of the sub-Himalayan region, the Andhs of Andhra Pradesh, and so on.

Among the Tharus, the community (tribe) is divided into two sections- the 'higher' and the 'lower'. The higher section has several endogamous subdivisions called *kuries*. The five kuries, namely Batha, Birtia, Dahait, Badvait and Mahtum which group is called *Rana Thakur* consider themselves superior to other groups of the Tharu community. The groups even restrict themselves from intermarriage and interdining.

The Andhs of Andhra Pradesh also have the notion of hierarchical order within the community. Of the two sub-tribe divisions, namely, Vartati and Khaltati, the former considered themselves as superior to the latter (viz., the Khaltati). The two groups also restraint from intermarriage.

20.4.5 Social differentiation by occupation

We can understand the kind of differentiation of roles in tribal societies in two but overlapping ways- the traditional and the modern trend. In the traditional sense, we see the role of the family as a crucial factor based mainly on production and consumption of resources. Such differentiation in terms of occupation in the familial traditional set up, are again, largely based on sex, age, expertise and other statuses such as being a father, a mother, son, or daughter and so on. In this context, every individual is expected to perform one's respective roles in accordance with the norms of the society. They are, however, not well-defined occupations specific to the members in many cases. This is simply because a person who is good in one occupation is also found to be performing in some other occupations and roles. For example, an agriculturist is also a good artisan and vice versa. Likewise, in a village level too, there are role differentiations in terms of certain roles and statuses recognized by the villagers, particularly in religious and political aspects. The chief of the village is expected to play certain roles according to the status (ascribed) he holds. He is regarded as the founder of the village and the first citizen (inhabitant) of the village. He performs specific roles and functions after his position. In return he is also given recognition and given certain roles

due to him by the villagers, be it, in terms of giving service in agricultural works from time to time and other services due to him.

In the modern times, many of these traditional norms would not be seen. The old practices have been eroded and have given way to modern practices. Modern education, modernization, and the need for diversification of occupations and specializations have demanded for a more elaborate and differentiated roles and occupations. Today, an educated tribal would hardly be seen in the agricultural work or other manual traditional occupations. S/he would go out and look for decent jobs outside the village and opt for decent jobs in town or city. There are tribals who have even succeeded in going overseas and find fortune for themselves. These educated tribals who have gone out of their village for their fortune, temporary or otherwise, experience change in their way of life and attitude. The longer they isolate from the village life, there are more chances of cultural erosion and connectivity to their village roots. For many of these educated tribals, the village situation would not quite fit their lives anymore. This trend is also true for those unskilled and semi-skilled tribal labourers. Thus, differentiation by profession and/or occupation has also been much prevalent in modern tribal situation. This kind of differentiation of occupations and professions has also led to emergence of a kind of class system in tribal societies.

20.4.6 Social Differentiation by Education

Education is a significant factor for social differentiation in the modern days. This is for the fact that 'education' most directly affects occupational attainment or upward occupational mobility in the contemporary world. The truth is substantiated by studies conducted across countries where the influence of education on occupational mobility and attainment 'transcend the direct effects of occupational inheritance' (Ramirez et al, 1980; Porter, 1979). However, education should not be construed as a neutral and independent factor. Education has always been affected by the backgrounds of class, ethnicity, race and even locality. The phenomenon is also quite true in the context of the tribals and indigenous peoples in various parts of the world.

Social differentiation among tribals in India, by and large, show that the educated tribals as they go out of the village and look for decent jobs find themselves in a different situation which gradually leads them to adapt to the environment and adopt the norms and culture of the new environment, be it of town or of city in one way or another. In course of time, they (tribals) found themselves different or differentiated from the original community life, be it in terms of habit, attitude and even worldview *inter alia*. This trend is most true with those tribals who have taken jobs outside the village and have settled in the new locality where they work. The second generation (children) of these educated tribals would have already missed most of the cultural values and norms of their community. There are still others who have even remained quite detached from the community. Thus, the factor of education in effecting social differentiation among tribals has become very prominent in most of the tribal areas.

20.4.7 Social Differentiation by Religion

In tribal societies, we can see two kinds of social differentiation in terms of religion which are based on factors of 'the ascribed' and 'the achieved'. In traditional societies, we would find role differentiation due to ascribed positions and statuses. There are variations of such differentiation from tribe to tribe. However, the underlying principle seem to suggest that every tribe recognizes roles of certain members, be it eldest or youngest, man or woman, etc. who performs religious roles. For example, among the Tangkhul Nagas, the head of

the clan has religious obligation. Likewise, the chief of the village too perform religious roles, be it for starting agricultural cycle (tilling the field), seed sowing, harvest, etc. by performing rituals to the almighty god for a good harvest.

In the modern times, trend social differentiation has become very complex and much differentiated even among the tribal societies. The existence various religious groups and denominations have diversified the roles and differentiation of the tribals. A tribal group may be well differentiated from another tribal or non-tribal group who profess different religion. Even among the same religious group, different denominations or sects have created social differentiations. Among the Christian tribals, differences of denominations, be it, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, Seven Day Adventists, etc. have their own organizations within the community set up and outside the community. This necessitates for maintaining different organizations and associations of different religious denominations in a village and larger set up. A village or tribe of multi-denominations would carry out different roles and functions under different organizations and affiliations. This practice results in social differentiation of believers of different religions and/or faiths. Likewise, in a broader scenario, a social group of certain belief system, be it sect, denomination or religion, differentiate from each other according to their belief systems and religious practices. For instance, a Christian would be differentiated from a Hindu, a Sikh from a Buddhist, a Muslim from a Hindu and so on. This kind of social differentiation based on dissimilarity of religions also takes place among the tribals.

20.4.8 Social Differentiation by Language

Language also plays a major role in bringing about social differentiation in tribal societies. There are various trends in this phenomenon based on language differences. There is a general tendency that people speaking the same tribal language seem to be closer as they identify themselves as being a fellow tribal on the basis of ethnicity. We find differentiations of social groups based on among other criteria, language, be it from tribe to tribe or from tribe to non-tribal communities.

Social differentiation also takes place within the same tribal group in a multi-dialectic situation. There are certain divisions which are maintained on the basis of similarity and dissimilarity of dialects among other things. They would primarily identify their association and loyalty with the cultural and dialectic zone they live in and to which they are a part of. Along with language differentiation, every village also maintained their own entity and affairs of life. Every village has their own self-governing mechanism (government) that takes care of the welfare and security of the village and the villagers. They have head (chief) of the village, representatives of the various clans and the commoners in the village set up. They consider the system as a democratically run mini-government based on a kind of socialism. The Tangkhul Nagas is an apt example of this kind of situation. Hence, language and/or dialect differentiation also plays significant role in social segregation and social differentiation.

20.4.9 Social Differentiation by Association

Among tribal societies, formation of associations for one kind or another is largely based on kinship and affinity. Clan associations which are usually spread over in one or more villages are generally prevalent in most of the societies. These associations are mainly launched for cooperation and/or protection in any circumstances called for. Tribal societies do have associations beyond kinship and affinity obligations such as political affiliations and allegiance for achieving certain goals and interests. People also become part of an association by way of being a follower of some icons and participation in rituals. Sometimes, they

are called *cult* associations, because, the members or followers participate in rituals addressed to a particular divinity. They are also called 'secret societies' because the divine power, or craft and knowledge they acquire and possess through divine revelations and power are generally not revealed to other members outside the congregation.

There are also associations based on sex and age. For instance, there are women societies for secular and/or also religious purposes. Again, based on age groupings, there are youth associations for unmarried men and women as well, called 'youth club' in many tribal societies of North East India. Yet in some societies, there are associations based on marital status. For instance, among the Tangkhul Nagas, we observe, associations of married men known as '*gahar long*' (married men council) which objective is to assist in the general welfare and development of the village.

People also launch associations for economic purposes in the form of 'credit association' or 'cooperatives'. According to the system, the members of the association subscribe a fixed sum of money periodically and withdraw the money over time in turn which is decided by lot or some other ways. Among the tribals of Manipur, the system is known as '*marup*' (meaning 'friendship' or 'cooperation').

20.4.10 Social Differentiation by Territory and Physical Environment

Territorial or geographical social differentiation is one of the unique characters of the tribal societies. The notion of territorial differentiation is prevalent from simplest tribal societies like the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh to relatively more advanced tribal groups like the Mizos and Nagas. The notion of territoriality is observed even among transhumant-pastoral societies like the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh. The idea of territoriality and its perceptions, however, would differ from one tribal group to another. Among the Nagas, there is a unique tradition of territorial differentiation through village formation. A Naga village is either a republic or a monarchy which has all the elements of an independent and self-contained set up. The systems function through the principles of democracy and socialism. A village has a well demarcated and strict territorial jurisdiction among other things. No village has the right to encroach on the jurisdiction of another village. Several villages constitute a larger social group called 'tribe'. In some of the Naga tribes, there is a kind of dual division of tribe like moiety system but maintaining territorial differentiation. For example, the Rengma Nagas and Konyak Nagas have dual territorial divisions. Such divisions are also found among various tribes in India.

Sometimes, new villages are also founded from the parental villages for one reason or another. A parental village may even have over three to four tributary and independent villages. Again, in some tribal societies, a village has subdivisions or localities. Generally, each locality or unit is exclusively occupied by one clan or at least dominated by a clan. For example, among the Naga villages, there are distinct localities where a clan is concentrated. They call these localities '*khel*' or '*tang*' by the Angami Nagas and Tangkhul Nagas respectively. Each *khel* or *tang* is indeed a mini-village despite being part of a village. However, in the recent years, such tradition is gradually eroding due to various external influences. Such kind of territorial local groups are also observed among other Indian tribes such as the Kamars of Chhatisgarh, the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh among others.

In almost the same principle, roles are differentiated on the basis of climate, etc. There are varying climates in a society that gives rise to differences in the nature of the work they perform at different seasons. Even in societies

with little variation of climate, they would have some seasonal variations which makes them differentiate their roles. Thus, climate variation also play role in giving rise to social differentiation.

20.2 Action and Reflection

What are the various types of social differentiation found among the tribals? Discuss them briefly.

20.5 Conclusion

Human society has always been divided into societies from time immemorial. These societies seek to represent society in general and strive for solidarity within the members of a society and among societies as well. Social differentiation is a process by which different statuses, roles, strata, and groups exist within a society. Social differentiation has been classified into many different ways.

In this Unit, we have considered Pitirim A. Sorokin's comprehensive classification of social differentiation. Sorokin classifies social differentiation into two broad categories based on the nature of its bonding and differentiations which he terms '*Unibonded groups*' (group bound into a solidary system by one main value or interest, such as, race, sex, age, kinship groups, ethnic groups, occupational groups, economic groups, religious groups, political groups, etc.) and '*Multibonded groups*' (group formed by the amalgamation of two or more unibonded values, such as, clans, tribes, castes, nations, classes, etc.).

Social differentiations among tribes and simple societies are mainly based on descent, sex, age, rank and hierarchy *inter alia*. The patterns of social differentiation among tribes differ from one another according to variations in their social system, tradition and belief systems. There are also variations in the mode of differentiation within a society. The various tribes in India are no exception to this variation.

20.6 Further Reading

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Unit 21

Religion and Politics

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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- define the concept of religion and politics;
- describe some of the major approaches to the study of religion;
- explain the interrelationship between religion and politics in India historically; and
- outline the major aspects of religion and politics in contemporary India.

21.1 Introduction

In this paper the term religion is being used in the Weberian. It is emphasised that 'sacred' notions have always made their presence felt in the domain of the secular. Thus seen, religion is viewed as a form of orientation to the secular world in the sense that it is a source of knowledge, values and norms of a society. Religion thus viewed is an ideology, a system of thought, located in the domain of the sacred. Though pertaining to the 'other world' and often associated with the 'internal' and the 'spiritual domain' of the individual and the collectivity, it has to do with the individuals and collectivities existing in 'this world', in that it offers a way to negotiate life.

The definition of politics is not as complex as that of religion. It is generally accepted that politics is a set of activities deeply entrenched in 'this world,' the secular world. These activities are those which are geared towards the attainment, acquisition, maintenance and consolidation of power. Political activities also include those which use symbols and metaphors of the sacred domain to determine and gain ends that are not religious. These are directed towards creating distinct spaces for communities implicit in which is a definite striving to attain power. In this unit you will learn about the relation between religion and politics in societies. We begin by explaining the meaning of religion and politics before trying to understand their relationship.

21.2 Understanding Religion and Politics

Religion and politics are inseparable; they have always been intertwined in a complex way. According to Romila Thapar.

"...The relationship between religion and politics had complex dimensions in the past and cannot be explained away by a simple monocausal explanation that reduces everything to a minimalist religious motivation. Religion is a

private matter so long as it remains within the thoughts of a person. When these thoughts are expressed publicly and inspire public action such as building monuments for worship and organizing fellow believers into carrying out political and social functions, then religion ceases to be an exclusively personal matter. It is no longer a matter of faith since its formulation as an organization of believers has a bearing on the functioning of the society. Its religious identity incorporates these functions that are expressed through its institutions such as monasteries, *mathas*, temples, mosques, Khanga's churches, synagogues, *gurudwaras*. Their role has to be assessed not merely in terms of the religion with which they are associated, but also in the context of their functions as institutions of society..." (Thapar, 2004: 229-30).

How do we understand religion? Religion is understood in different ways by different people. Philosophers, theologians and sociologists have different perspectives to understand religion. However, sociologists have understood religion as primarily a social phenomenon. Every society has religious beliefs, rites and organization. Religion very often influences our understanding of everyday life. In many societies religion affects the way we relate to each other. Our religious beliefs often guide our social interaction. Religion can be a unifying factor in some societies. However, in some societies it can be a matter of conflict.

"Religion broadly refers to:

- a) experiences of human beings as a collectivity in all parts of the world.
- b) Relationships between human beings, probably in all walks of life, and
- c) To all facts of everyday human life, for example, education, politics, economy etc."

(Kennedy, M 1992 : pp. 9 in IGNOU, BDP elective Course, ESO-05 : Society and Religion, Block-1)

Therefore, it is very clear that religion is a social phenomena. It is related with politics, as mentioned earlier in an inextricable manner. Since, it is a social phenomena and part of the culture of society which we inherit, often we grow up being socialized into the religious beliefs, values and practices of our parents. It is another thing that after maturity we may reject this religion and take up another or simply not be part of any religion.

Religion as a phenomenon is very difficult to define, but central to the notion of religion is the idea of the 'sacred' as opposed to the 'secular' and the 'profane'. It is a "... particular class of phenomenon, a kind of knowledge, a varied form of activities in space and time and a typology of roles and persons...." (Madan, T.N. 1991:2).

We explore the relationship between religion and politics in four sections. The first section provides an overview of the various sociological and anthropological approaches to religion, and locates the perception of religion in this framework; the second section deals with the relationship between religion and politics in India historically; the third section describes the manifestations of this relationship in contemporary India in the form of communalism, rise of secularism and fundamentalism, religious nationalism, and the fourth section forms the conclusion.

21.3 Approaches to the study of religion

Study of religion as an important element of social life has been the focus of attention of several sociologists and social anthropologists. Here below is an overview of some of the major approaches to religion.

i) **The Functional Approach**

The basic assumptions of this approach is that parts of a society are linked to each other through its values and norms and that each part of the society fulfils a positive function for the maintenance of the total society. Religion furnishes the consensual and integrative framework for society. For Durkheim the 'sacred' was the most fundamental religious idea or phenomenon. According to him...

"A religion is an unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called church all those who adhere to them" (1965:62)

Important, from our perspective is (a) the aspect of 'things set apart' and (b) the idea of a moral community, which is an eminently collective thing (ibid: 63). What is 'set apart' is not just supernatural beings, but also persons with supernatural or magical powers, places (temples, mosques, churches), certain performances and events (such as births, deaths, marriages, eclipses etc). The term 'set apart' means that which is other than routine or ordinary.

The notion of the 'sacred' becomes sharper when contrasted with the 'profane' or the 'secular'. Durkheim emphasises that this is the very core of religious phenomena.

He says, ..."All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of things, real and ideal, of which men think into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words 'profane' and sacred (ibid: 52).

Durkheim was not interested in seeking the historical origins of religion but was concerned with the sociological causes for the existence of religion, which he found in the human need for social life. To him religion was a collective phenomenon, which arose from social interaction. He studied the Australian aborigines, agreeing with the prevailing scholarly opinion that aboriginal totemism was the simplest, 'the elementary' form of the religious life. He was of the opinion that if one succeeded in discovering the origin of totemic beliefs, it was possible to discover at the same time"...the causes leading to the rise of the religious sentiment in humanity...." (ibid: 195).

Presenting a detailed discussion of totemic gatherings among these aborigines, he located the roots of religious beliefs and practices in social interaction.

Durkheim concluded that 'the collective and anonymous force of the clan, the God of the clan, the totemic principle can therefore be nothing other than the clan itself (ibid: 236). Generalizing from the Australian case - the elementary form of the religious life - Durkheim came to consider society as the source and sustainer of religious sentiments and structures and, therefore, God, its members, creating among them 'the sensation of a perpetual dependence' (ibid: 237). Thus Durkheim's interpretation of religion derives religion from the very nature of social life.

Reflection and Action 21.01

You have just read about Durkheim's concept of religion and society. Talk to five members of your family/community about how they describe the essential elements of their religion and how it is practiced in everyday life.

Write a report of one page on "Perspective on Religion and Society in My Community." Compare your note with those of other students at your Study Center.

A.R. Radcliffe-Brown focused on the role of religion in the maintenance of social solidarity in his sociological analysis of ritual. He was influenced by W. Robertson Smith in his emphasis upon rituals rather than beliefs in the study of religion. He followed Durkheim closely, but narrowly. He along with others, such as Malinowski, of the British school of sociological functionalism was concerned with the question of how religion anywhere and at any time contributes to the maintenance of social solidarity According to him...

"An orderly social life amongst human beings depends upon the presence in the minds of the members of society of certain sentiments, which control the behaviour of the individual in relation to others. Rites can therefore be shown to have specific social functions, when...they have for their effect to regulate, maintain and transmit from one generation to another sentiments on which the constitution of society depends..."(1952:157).

E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1965) disagrees with Radcliffe Brown. His monograph on the Azande (1937) shows a shift in the explanation of supernatural phenomena from function to meaning. Witchcraft among the Azande was explained by him as a mode of causality for human misfortune. In his later work, 'Nuer Religion' (1956), the same shift from straightforward functionalism to the problem of meaning can be noticed, though he did not go into an explicit phenomenological analysis. He was close to Durkheim when he interpreted the Nuer religious thought and ritual in terms of social order. In the study of religious beliefs and practices in Gujarat (1973) David Pocock is concerned with the problem of subjective meaning and offers an alternative to narrowly functionalist approach.

Venugopal (1998) thinks religion can be functional at pragmatic level as well. Human beings face stressful situations in everyday life, such as, those of sickness, misfortune, death etc, which disrupt the normal tenor of a household. In such situations religion, ritual, magic provide a kind of solace which wealth and privilege can not give (1998: 91).

Merton (1968) and Parsons (1975) have referred to the functional roles of religion. Merton shows a definite relationship between Puritanic ethic and the rise of science in the seventeenth century England. Hard work and commitment to the improvement of this world, etc., which came from Puritan faith were effective in developing scientific temper. In other words, rationality of religion influenced the lives of scientists. Robert Boyle, John Ray, Newton and many others were not only noted scientists but were also devoted to new ethics. They contributed to the improvement of the material world through their scientific researches as a tribute to the glory of God (Venugopal, 1998: 91).

Talcott Parsons demonstrated that the normative order of society in the West rested on the religious premises of Christianity; it inspired voluntaristic kind of action, wherein individuals are committed to the welfare of others in society (ibid).

Functionalism focuses on the consensual rather than a dialectical pattern of growth. It looks at the role of religion mainly in terms of the present and does not address the problem of subjective meaning and the historical and cultural aspects of religion.

ii) Weber and the phenomenological approach

Ever since the publication of Evans-Pritchard's 'Nuer Religion' sociological and social anthropological studies of religion have increasingly moved in the direction of phenomenology, 'a trend anticipated in the work of Max Weber,' (Madan, 1991:6).

Box 21.1 : Phenomenology

If you recall back to what you had learnt about 'phenomenology' in your core course MSO-002 Research Methodologies And Methods, Book-1, page 81, you will know what phenomenology means. However, to again refresh your memory, we explain this concept and theoretical approach to understand social reality again.

Phenomenology as a term gained wide acceptance first in philosophy as a result of its use by Hegel in his work *Phenomenology of Mind* 1897. But the main source of the phenomenological tradition in modern times is to be found in the writings of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). "the dominant concerns of Husserl's phenomenology are expressed in the root of the word itself, derived from the conjunction of the noun form of 'phainama', to appear, and logos to reason. The origin of human reason is to be discovered in the structure of appearance in the basic ordering of human experience". (Mitchell, Dumcan C.(ed.) 81-141) Thus, phenomenology concerns itself with the source of knowledge and how human beings derive knowledge.

Weber's sociology of religion provides an alternative perspective to Durkheim's which emphasises the 'exteriority,' and 'coerciveness of 'social facts,' which are also collective representations. The essence of Weber's sociology of religion lies in his emphasis on an 'interpretive understanding' of social reality, leading to causal explanation. From this perspective an understanding of 'religious behaviour... can only be achieved from the viewpoint of the subjective experiences, ideas and purposes of the individuals concerned - in short, from the viewpoint of the religious behaviour's 'meaning' (1964:1).

Weber studied preliterate as well as the so-called world religions (viz., Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam) in order to examine, among other things, the relations between religious beliefs and practices on the one hand, and the secular domain of politics, economics, sexuality, etc on the other. He is unlike Durkheim who paid particular attention to the relation between it and the religious milieu and did not look at economy. In "Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism", weber argued for a causal relationship between the Protestant ethics and the rise of rational capitalism in Western Europe.

Weber said that, "only in the modern Western world that rational capitalistic enterprises with fixed capital, free labour, the rational specialization and combination of functions, bound together in a market economy are to be found... and that economic grounds alone do not provide a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon" (Weber 1947: 279)

He looked at the Calvinist ethics of Protestantism and asserted that the crucial elements of this ethic were the ideas of predestination and 'calling,' i.e., the notion that one's fate and one's work are both predetermined by God. This idea of predestination generated anxiety amongst the Calvinists. In order to cope with this anxiety, he Calvinist put his faith in the hope that 'God helps those who help themselves. Thus he himself creates his own salvation, or...the conviction of it' (1930:115).

This led to worldly asceticism, i.e., exercise of restraint on immediate gratification, which had the unintended consequence of accumulation of capital and expanded investment, which nurtured capitalism. It was thus that the Christian ascetics 'strode in the market place of life' (ibid: 154).

Thus in Europe capitalism was an aspect of the process of rationalization, which was facilitated by the theological debates within Christianity. Weber went beyond Europe to examine the economic ethics associated with the other world religions. A basic conclusion he drew after examining the religions in India was that 'Indian religiosity is the cradle of those religious ethics which

have abrogated the world, theoretically, practically and to the greatest extent' (1958:323). However, other social scientists, like Milton Singer (1972) and others who studied religion in India found that this opinion did not hold true at the field level. Singer's study proved that. Hindu businessmen had the capacity to, compartmentalise their religious life from their business life. Jainism and Buddhism both have elements, which are closer to the ethics of profit and enterprise.

Weber distinguished between 'mysticism' or the attitude of abandoning worldly involvement, and 'rationally active asceticism,' which is this worldly and seeks to master the world. The central concerns of Weber's sociology of religion, therefore, included the related questions of the future of religion and the nature of human existence in modern society. To him the religious fate of mankind is constructed consciously by human beings 'themselves through the world images they fashion and the social institutions they construct. Weber had an enormous influence on contemporary works in the field.

Peter Berger looks upon religion as that special human activity through which comprehensive, meaningful, sacred cosmos is constructed. (Berger 1973). Clifford Geertz, a cultural anthropologist views religion as a cultural system – as a system of symbols implicit in which is a world view and a related code of conduct. Both these social scientists stress the importance of interpretive understanding. For Berger, religion is a way to find 'meaning' in life, to bestow legitimacy on social life and to help it to remove chaos. For Geertz, religion makes human life meaningful in the midst of moral perplexities and social conflicts.

iii) **Structuralist Approach**

A major contemporary theoretical development in the study of religion derives from the structuralist movement in anthropology initiated by Claude Levi – Strauss.

Levi-Strauss subsumes the study of the 'sacred' under forms of thought, modes of classification, mythologies etc. He disagrees with the identification of 'totemism' with religious forms. To him totems are rather modes of classification. (See Levi-Strauss 1963 & 1966). He asserts that the sacred objects owe their significance neither to the narrow considerations of utility, nor to their social nor moral character, but to their availability as concrete manifestations or embodiments of abstract ideas. The primitives do not '*think*' differently from the *civilized* but they *symbolize* differently. Religious systems, comprising myths and rites, are symbolic systems of signs, of communication, which establish through analogical reasoning continuities between nature and culture and between cosmic order and social life.

Louis Dumont has been one of the most distinguished exponents of the structuralist approach in Indianist studies. His 'Homo Hierarchicus' (1967) identifies religious values – notions of pure and impure – as the very foundation of the caste system.

In the works of both Levi-Strauss and Dumont, social phenomena or cultural facts, appear above 'the threshold of consciousness' as manifest expressions of fundamental 'latent' structures. The task of structural analysis is to explicate this relationship and to show that societies differ not in terms of fundamental constituent elements but in the way these elements are interrelated in various patterns.

Veena Das (1977), and JPS Uberoi (1996) are some of the other social scientists, who have made a structural analysis of religion in India. They present interpretation of ritual in terms of certain fundamental categories of thought

(such as time, space, purity, power and auspiciousness) and in relation to the structure of social relations.

Common to these approaches is the fact that in all of them religion is regaded as an important element of social life. The system of beliefs, rituals and practices in themselves are not significant; they are significant only in the way these are manifested and actualized in interactions between individuals and groups in a society. It is sociologically significant as a basis for social interactions in the process of which, through the use of symbols, metaphors, language and rhetoric strategies it demarcates boundaries, creates distinct often-conflicting identities.

Thus perceived religion has always been an important basis of identity and marker of boundaries. The substantive content cosmological, theological and metaphysical of religion *per-se* is not significant, it assumes significance when it is used by individuals and collectivities to gain political ends.

This paper, approaches religion not in terms of the substantive content of any particular religion or with its ritual aspect. It rather approaches it in terms of its relationship with the secular world. What is viewed as significant is the dynamic aspect of the relationship between the two realms. In other words the focus is on practical modes of being rather than on the abstract realms of value. In the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith, who breaks up the omnibus category of religion into *faith* and tradition – that is matters ‘internal’ and ‘external’ – *a religious tradition’ is a part of this world, it is a product of human activity; it is diverse, it is fluid, it grows, it changes, it accumulates...*’(in Madan 1998). Religion is viewed in its aspect of a religious tradition, where it is presented as an ideology operating in particular historical setting, by interested groups such as political parties or by charismatic individuals to achieve vested interests.

Box 21.2: A Millenarian Movement : Birsa Munda (1874-1901)

One of the best known millenarian movements in tribal India was the Birsa Munda movement (1874-1901) in Chotanagpur, Bihar. The movement among the Munda tribals led by their leader Birsa was typical of the resistance and revitalisation movements in the latter half of the 19th Century. It represents the struggle and aspirations of his people and sowed the first stirrings of nationalism among them. It is characterised by a combination of a religious and political movement and by an urge to recreate the old world which had disappeared under the impact of colonial rule in India. (Singh, K.S. 1983. Birsa Munda and his movement 1874-1901, A Study of a millenarian movement in Chotanagpur. Oxford University Press: Calcutta)

Seen thus, religion in this sense is an important social force, which operates in society and contributes to its constitution.

Reflection and Action 21.2

Do you know of a socio-religious movement which has made a difference to the life of the people who follow it in a socio-cultural sense, for eg. Bhakti Movement in the past, Birsa Munda movement of the tribals in Chotanagpur, Bihar etc.

Write a report of one page about the social, political and cultural background of this religious movement and its present state. Discuss the report with your Academic Counsellor and peers at your Study Center.

21.4 Religion and Politics in India: Historical Overview.

When we examine the history of India from the ancient times to the contemporary, we find that in India the patterns of interaction between religion and politics has varied from time to time and it has had varied social

consequences. (Sharma, T.R. 1988 : 41). Sharma argues that in India one element which is all pervasive throughout its history, though in varying degrees, is the use of religion for the fulfillment of political ends and aspirations. In India religion always served politics and politics has often served religion. Religion was never able to fully extricate itself from politics nor could politics ever rid itself fully of religion. Thus, one finds politicisation of religion in some manifest or latent form at all stages of our history. He says that in India historically we find this interaction between religion and politics in four phases. First phase extended from Indus valley civilisation to the advent of Islam, the second from the advent of Islam to the Indian muting of 1857, the third from 1857 to Indian Independence in 1947, and the fourth from 1947 onwards. While there was close interplay between religion and politics during all these phases, the nature, the intensity and the dynamics of this interaction was different during each of these phases.

The sacred and the secular perspectives have been inextricably interwoven in pre-colonial India. Indian society has witnessed continuous changes affecting the political systems, occupational structures, culture and religion. Religions in India have been the prime source of tension, innovation and even modernization (see Venugopal, 1998). The use of religious idioms has been important in initiating change in India, particularly in political movements and reform movements.

The beginning of the nineteenth century has been marked by a number of social reform movements. This section looks at some of these political and social reform movements.

Though the British rule brought about far-reaching changes in administration, transport, communication and economy, it also disrupted traditional social ties and fragmented culture. It was at this point of time that Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal, Dayanand Saraswati in the North, Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra introduced reforms in education and socio-religious pursuits and also provided a perspective on national life. They drew upon Indian tradition as well as Western knowledge. They were inspired by the rationalist and the liberal doctrines, according to which the basic unit of society was an individual perceived as citizen and as a human being. They used the Western methods of organization in sponsoring schools and colleges for men and women. Their aim was to raise the national consciousness in terms of culture. These reform movements led to a mass awakening which paved the way for the political awakening in the twentieth century. The struggle for independence was in the initial stages a product of educated middle-classes in Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu to mention a few states. In addition to liberal education, a religious upsurge stimulated the youth to participate in the freedom struggle. (Venugopal, 1998).

In Maharashtra, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, revived on a large scale, the Ganapati puja which then served as venue for political meetings. In Bengal, Ras Behari Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal and their associates used religious symbols centred around the Durga Puja to develop a political consciousness. Apart from this, socio-religious plays in these and other provinces of India conveyed political messages to the public. During the national Independence Movement, Gandhiji used the Hindu notion of 'Ram Raya' to unify, integrate and mobilise a majority of the Indian population.

In post 1947 India the relationship between religion and politics are manifested in the growth of communalism, development of secularism and rise of fundamentalism, which is the focus in the next section.

21.5 Religion and Politics in Contemporary India

Today the debate in India is primarily focussed on communalism, secularism and fundamentalism/ religious nationalism: Religion and Politics in contemporary India can be *** as undergoing a different phase of *** where interests other than “regions” guide actions of indurid.

Communalism it must be asserted at the outset is not in the main about religion.

“...It can be defined...” as an ideology which envisages the religious community as a political group committed to the protection and promotion of its social and economic interests and cultural values. It is thus a substitute for nationalism. The territory occupied (or sought to be occupied) by the group is seen as ‘holy land’ or ‘land of the pure’ which is what the words *‘Pakistan* and *Khalistan* mean. As pointed out by Louis Dumont, the religious element that enters into the composition of communalism seems to be but the shadow of religions, i.e. religion taken not as the essence and guide of life in all spheres, but only as a sign of the distinction of one human, at least virtually political group against others (Madan, 1991) In the context of India, the important question to be addressed is viz: - has the persistence of communalism in India and the persistence of communal riots, any thing to do with the substantive ‘religious’ contents of the conflicting religions? This section attempts to answer this question by examining the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims.

Historical analysis of Hindu-Muslim communal conflict, its causes and conditions has been highly contentious in character. According to one group of historians, (such as, Gyanendra Pandey (2000). Sandrio Freitag (1989), Ayesha Jalal (1985 etc.) Hindu-Muslim consciousness and conflict are largely modern constructions in which the British colonial rulers played a major role, either through deliberate ‘divide and rule’ policies or through ways in which they categorised, classified and typified the various people of India for example they categorised some tribes as criminal tribes. These constructions views of Hindu and/or Muslim communal consciousness or communalism as forms of ideology connect to class, group and elite political interests. Thus to them the growth of communal consciousness is an instrument of struggle, either against the British or between Hindus and Muslims for political advantage or supremacy. In the course of the struggle communal violence was often the result of conflicts framed within a communal discourse. They hold that communalism is a cover that hides a multiplicity of mainly political and economic causes.

The other group of historians (C.A. Bayly (1985), Gaborieau (1985) argue that there is more continuity between the past and the present, extending backward at least to the early 18th century and in some arguments to the earlier period of Moghul rule. To them inter-religious conflict and riots that resemble contemporary Hindu-Muslim conflict were present in pre-modern times. They lay greater stress on their religious significance and on the existence of strong communal identities that preceded them (Brass, 2003).

However, in modern India we still find the traces of ‘divide and rule’ policy of the colonial rulers of the past. The imprint that has led to a great divide’ between the two largest communities of Hindus and Muslims in India keeps waxing and waning according to the political climate of the nation as well as its different religions. Brass says “Whatever the similarities, continuities and persisting idioms may be found before the 19th century, it would seem idle to over emphasise them. The consolidation of the heterogeneous Hindu and Muslim groupings in the subcontinent and the politicization of the differences between them are overwhelmingly a modern phenomenon, deeply connected

with the striving for control over the modern state apparatus, involving a claim to rightful inheritance on the part of Hindus and to self determination on the part of Muslim leaders. In the course of the struggles for power that developed during British rule, intensified in the late 19th century and culminated in the division of India in 1947, a discourse of Hindu-Muslim difference was created that has struck deep roots in both communities and acquired a partly self sustaining momentum that at the same time continues to be fed by political competition.” (Brass, 2003).

Asserting that communal conflict has little to do with religion itself, but with its, use by the politicians for their vested interests, Ali Asghar Engineer, one of the most prolific writers on Hindu-Muslim riots in India, blames neither the Hindus nor Muslims as communities for the flaming of communal riots. To him it is the politicians on the one hand and the forms of economic competition between Hindus and Muslims on the other that are responsible for the eruption of communal riots. To him minor disputes are exploited by petty-minded politicians, who have no qualms in sacrificing human lives that follow upon their exploitation of such disputes for their political advantage. At times political movement themselves are the cause of violence, as in the ‘*Ramshila*’ *puja*’ processions of militant Hindus carrying bricks to Ayodhya in the movement, to bring down the Babri Mosque there and replace it with a temple to the god Ram. These processions resulted in the eruption of riots all over the country. Thus, to Engineer, the primary cause of communal riots in India is the pursuit of political advantage at any cost. Its clear that despite all the condemnation of riots from all concerned members of the conflicting communities to the elite intellectuals to the state – the riots continue.

Brass uses Mertonian kind of functional analysis to explain this persistence. To him riots serve the interests of particular individual groups, organization and even society as a whole in concrete useful ways that are beneficial to them. Further using one of the more common uses of the term ‘function’ viz, that of ‘use’ or ‘utility,’ he speaks of the functional utility of the persistence of Hindu-Muslim riots in India for a wide variety of interests, groups, institutions and organizations including ultimately the state. Under these circumstances, it is not possible to produce a broad enough consensus in society to eliminate violent riots from Indian public life (ibid).

Thus, contrary to the prevailing notion that riots are spontaneous rather than planned, that they breakout either unexpectedly as a consequence of a build up of tensions that may or may not explode under fortuitous circumstances, they, to Brass, are....

“meticulously planned and coordinated from beginning to end. Rather they are dramatic productions, street theatre performances that are meant to appear spontaneous, but involve many people in a variety of roles and actions that include inciting the interest of the audience, the dramatization and enlargement of incidents into a fit subject for a performance and finally, the production of the event... [they] are dramatic productions, creations of specific persons, groups and parties, operating through institutionalized riot networks within a discursive framework of Hindu-Muslim communal opposition and antagonism, that in turn produces specific forms of political practice that make riots integral to the political process...” (ibid).

21.6 Secularism

The Partition in India with its communal holocaust and forced migration and its Independence gave rise to an intense debate about what the character of the new nation-state should be: Secular, i.e., multi-community with equal rights for all?, Socialist? or Hindu? (Pandey: 2001).

Pakistan emerged, as an overwhelming Muslim country, observing which sections of the Hindu nationalist press in India began to assert that India should be cleared of Muslims (ibid).

This was the rise of Hindu nationalism, alongside of which also arose, much more emphatically, another more inclusive nationalism, which emphasised the composite character of Indian society and refused to give the same sort of primacy to the Hindu element in India's history and self-consciousness. This was later termed as 'secular nationalism', which Nehru called as the 'real' or Indian 'Nationalism'. This was the nationalism of the Indian Constitution (ibid).

The Indian Constitution reflects a national consensus about the vision of a secular Indian polity which emerged during the national struggle. It is important to point out that secularism in the sense of the separation of the church and the state (as it means in the West) is not relevant in India. Here it implies an impartiality of the state in its dealings with citizens professing different faiths (*Sarva Dharma Sambhav*).

The emergence of a secular society in the West has been a consequence of the growth of modern industrial mode of production and advancement of scientific knowledge. While the growth of scientific knowledge leads to a decline of cognitive function of the religious and the scientific world, the rise of modern industrial societies have been accompanied with a process of differentiation whereby various parts of the society and their functions becoming increasingly specialized based on knowledge.

The notion of the secular in India is thus different from that of the West. The deviations from archetypal secularism were based on the plea made by Dr. Ambedkar that the influence of religion (Hindu), such as, caste system in this country were so vast that they covered every aspect of life, from birth to death. He said unless the state had the power, it would be impossible for our legislatures to enact any social measures, Gandhi also believed that the secular law in certain cases could be used to tackle social evils.

India's secularism bears the impact of non-dualist worldview of the Indian people as well as the impact of India's plural society and India's experience. Hence, it has been rightly described as a "canopy concept" – all-inclusive concept based on universal tolerance – in which the state has been assigned the role of a reformer of a society in which religion determines the social structure and social behaviour.

There is a growing skepticism among intellectuals about the use of secularism in India, whether secularism is good for India, particularly in the wake of social and political upheavals witnessed in the past few years.

"...The social and political turmoil in the country does not make the case for secularism weaker, it makes it stronger..." (Beteille, 2000).

The need for secularism is not because it will eliminate religious passion from human affairs, but that it may to some extent neutralize and soften its expression in public life. "...However ardently one may desire the separation of religion and politics, it is impossible in a democracy to prevent political leaders from exploiting religious sentiments or religious leaders from seeking political alliances..." (ibid).

India is both culturally and demographically different from Western countries such as Britain and France. India's religious minorities may comprise only a small proportion of the total population, but in absolute numbers they are very large. There is no question here of the differences of religious identity getting obliterated through either peaceful assimilation or forceful conversion in either the long or the short run. Thus secularism ensures that no religious

doctrine or community exercises unwarranted dominion over the other, and not only to nourish institutions that are by their nature indifferent to religious demands.

Secularism either in the sense of equal respect for all religions, or in the sense of indifference to religion in selected spheres of social life, is a philosophy of moderation, that makes it particularly compatible with democratic politics. It is undermined when political parties heighten or exploit religious differences for the mobilization of political support. (See Beteille, 2000).

21.7 Fundamentalism

Drawing upon the experience of American fundamentalists and that of Iranian revolution in 1979, Madan describes fundamentalism; as (i) affirmation of inspiration, final authority, inerrancy, and transparency of scripture as the source of belief, knowledge, morals, and manners; (ii) recognition of the reactive character of fundamentalism: it is not an original impulse as, for example, orthodoxy is, but a reaction to a perceived threat or crisis; (iii) intolerance of dissent, implying monopoly over truth...; (iv) cultural critique, that is, the idea that all is not well with social or community life as lived at a particular time; (v) appeal to tradition, but in a selective manner that establishes a meaningful relationship between the past and the present, redefining or even inventing tradition in the process; (vi) capture of political power and remodeling of the state for the achievement of the stated objectives; and (vii) charismatic leadership. (Madan, 1998: 27-28).

However, fundamentalism has been often equated with orthodoxy, revivalism, cultural nationalism, traditionalism and communalism, the latter two being particularly mixed up with fundamentalism, it would be pertinent to briefly distinguish between the three. Traditionalism as compared to fundamentalism is quietest and it is content with pursuing religion in the sacred sphere without it spilling over into other domains particularly, the political. The element of activism is common to communalism and fundamentalism, whereas the communalists have a particular 'other', for the fundamentalists it is rather a case of 'us' versus "the rest," because the 'rest' is a "general other." Moreover, fundamentalism reaches deep into its philosophical and religious roots to define its community of believers. It looks inwards and is self-producing. (Gupta 1996: 206).

It is common knowledge that long range tolerance and catholicity are an abiding general characteristic of the psyche of the people in India. In spite of the fact that it is multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi cultural nation, fundamentalism is alien to Indian people as a whole. By and large the Nationalist Movement at the grass roots or people's level was all-inclusive, also the Constitution of India reflects the values of National Movement.

Nevertheless, some of the seven features of fundamentalism enumerated above by Madan can be located or identified in Indian polity. There have always existed pockets or "enclaves" of fundamentalist forces among the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians in India in the past and in the contemporary times. As a matter of fact, Indian people have suffered from spasmodic onslaughts of one or the other variant of fundamentalism, specially communalism, religious nationalism and terrorism.

There are several reasons for this. But during the past five or six decades this phenomena is intimately related to the process of 'democratization' of Indian polity, leading, inter alia, to injection of doses of political 'power' and all that it means.

Further, Islamic fundamentalism has its roots in the concept of Pan-Islamism which expresses itself in the movement like *tabliqi* (conversion or proselytesation) and which in turn, fosters Hindu fundamentalism (say *shuddhi* movement).

There are also international ramifications of Pan-Islamism. For example, some Islamic states have been supporting Islamic fundamentalist forces in India. This phenomena was very prominent feature of political scene in the eighties (Meenakshi Puram conversion).

We would like to specially refer to a few instance of role of religion in contemporary Indian politics. First, a person not at all known for his, religiosity, M.A. Jinnah, the father of Pakistan argued that one did not have to be religious to appreciate the cultural differences between Islam and Hinduism. The cultural distinctiveness of Indian Islam, he stressed, constituted the rationale for a separate nation-state of Pakistan. To him Islam and Hinduism are not religions in the strict sense of the word, but are different and distinct social orders, belonging to two different civilizations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions....(ibid).

Now take, the rise of Sikh militancy in the eighties. "Sikh fundamentalism is a 'reactive' phenomenon. It is a defense mechanism, where aggressiveness "...is a cover for fear of the threatening other - namely, nonconformist Sikhs, secularists of all communities, and communal Hindus, and as certain process, notably heresy, modernization, cultural disintegration, and political domination..." (Madan, 1998). These are fears and anxieties which the fundamentalists would want every Sikh to have.

There is not enough space to go into the historical and political dynamics of the growth of this perceived threat to cultural identity. But briefly stated, this fear and anxiety not only found its culmination in the demand for a separate Sikh state "Khalistan," but also in the rise of fundamentalism among a cross section of Sikhs, Muslim and in the Hindu. This is also manifest in the "...demand of some religious communities notably Sikhs, for the recognition of their 'right' to repudiate the separation of religion and politics in the conduct of their own community life..." (Madan, 1998).

21.8 Conclusion

Secular nationalism is India's acknowledged ideology, it has its roots in National movement. It implies that all religions are treated as equal in the sense that none will dominate the functioning of the state. But the term 'secular' does not mean separation of state from religion, but implies neutrality of state to all religions. Secularism, in India means religious equidistance, but not non-involvement. Here religion is not the determinant of Indians citizenship, it is their birthright.

Secular nationalism and religious nationalism have been two of the most important organizing devices for mass politics in India, which have generated passions in politics - sometime very violent. It has taken primarily two forms viz., Muslim and Hindu nationalism. Muslim nationalism emerged in the first half of the twentieth century. It led to the birth of Pakistan in 1947. Hindu nationalism could be viewed as the mirror image of Muslim nationalism. According to the Hindu nationalists, Hinduism is not only the religion of India's majority community but also what gives India its distinctive national identity; other religions must assimilate to the Hindu center. (Varshney, 2002). Hindu nationalists insist on having cultural and political primacy in shaping India's destiny and build Hindu unity politically.

In short, the Indian polity is sub-continental and complex. It has been characterised by pluralism. Since 1947 India has accepted the political culture

of democracy. In this ethos, the dynamics of the relationship between religion and politics has raised many problem regarding secularism, rise of communalism, religious nationalism and fundamentalism. Above all it has even raised the sensitive question of the nature of national identity of India –what is India? And who is an Indian?

21.9 Further Reading

Durkheim, Emile, 1965 (1915). *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Translated by J.W, Swain, Fdree Press, New York.

Madan, T.N. (ed) (1991). *Religion in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.



Unit 22

Religion and Culture

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- 22.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit, it is expected that you will be able to:

- provide the definition and meaning of the concept of culture and religion;
- discuss the theoretical explanation of the bond between culture and religion;
- describe the three classical sociological approaches towards the understanding of the sacred and the secular or profane order;
- outline some of the other approaches to understand culture and religion; and
- explain the relationship between culture and religion in India.

22.1 Introduction

Both philosophy and sociology, prominently among social sciences, continue to explore why all cultures have religious beliefs and practices, and why they feel strongly about them. All societies – traditional, modern and postmodern – practice some form of religion and religion is held as an important component of society everywhere. Even in some ‘socialist’ states, where religion is expected to play only a marginal role if any, religion has shown a remarkable tenacity. It has been observed that notwithstanding ban on practicing religion in public life in such nation states, people practice some or the other type of religion here as well. Recent political and cultural developments in the leftist ‘socialist’ world have demonstrated the importance of religion as a significant social institution in no uncertain terms. For example in Poland during the 1990’s a Catholic Political leader Les Walescha was instrumental in bringing down the communist regime.

In a society as diverse and heterogeneous as India, the multiplicity of religions, cults, sects and divine belief systems. Indian culture has always placed high premium on its systems of faith and religious observance. Therefore, a systematic sociological discussion on the nature of relationship between culture and religion assumes significance in our context. Such a discussion, however, should take into consideration the wide-ranging and scholarly approaches and conceptual viewpoints on the nature of such relationships. This kind of a discussion becomes sociologically fruitful when it is placed within the global framework of sociology of religion from where lessons can be drawn to understand the Indian situation.

It is, of course, equally true that there is a notable number of non-believers in all societies including those where religion finds the political and economic support of the ruling elite. The moot question often raised by sociologists is *why some individuals and groups believe in and practice a religion devoutly, while others in the same society or culture are skeptical about religion*. This also raises the issue of the complex relationship between the two vital concepts in sociology, namely, religion and culture. Since a pretty long period of time it has been proved without reservation that religion is a complex phenomenon especially when considered in the total societal – rather than individual – context and hence this topic deserves a close and in-depth attention of social scientists. This unit intends to discuss the moot issues related to the multifaceted issue of the relationship between culture and religion at the conceptual level and then to understand the Indian scenario in the light of this belief.

The discussion on the topic ‘religion and culture’ has been an important debate simply because religion is understood to be a critical dimension of all societies today *as it always has been*. In spite of the processes of urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation in the post-industrial context, religion and its practices touch almost all aspects of contemporary human life. The sociology of religion seeks to understand religion in its varied manifestations as a social institution, as a cultural practice, and as a pattern of beliefs and activities that are shaped by prevalent societal conditions and which, in turn, shape these conditions. Although recent developments such as secularisation and globalisation have challenged several aspects of religious practices all over the world, *religiosity* is still a dominant characteristic of contemporary society. In recent decades, it is not uncommon to realise that countries at times are divided into distinct blocks (such as Christian or Islamic nations) on the basis of religions they support and maintain. What is more, such a distinction also breeds inward animosity and acrimony, if not outwardly hatred, towards those who *do not belong*.

The sociological discussion on the relationship between culture and religion becomes important also for its historical worth. Many prominent intellectuals of the modern social science era opposed organised and institutionalised religion. In a sense, the basic identity of the modern intellectual advances in Europe was formed in the movement for liberation of society and culture from the dogmas of the church that had ruled medieval Europe. This movement was characterised then as the confrontation of scientific temper with doctrinaire character of religion and religious establishment. The progressive intellectuals of the period when sociology was born were solidly in revolt against dogmatic pursuit of religious belief system. They were ready to build a cultural system bereft of religious deliberations.

All these direct to the need for a concentrated debate on the relationship between culture and religion. Such a discourse should take place in the context of individual’s functioning as a member of society. Such an attempt will be made in the next few pages with the help of vast sociological literature available on this topic.

The famous argument on the Indian ‘sacred cow’ by the cultural ecology school of anthropology is worth remembering in this context. The Hindu prohibition on cow slaughter much against the problem of severe malnutrition in India is the case in point. Marvin Harris (1975) demonstrated that live cattle play a very vital role in the Indian ecological system. Close association between religious practices on the one hand and cultural and ecological factor on the other are the issues that are presented here. This kind of sociological insight into the relationship between culture and religion in India needs to be augmented to understand this society more specifically. The exceedingly complex relationship between human behaviour and the nature can be understood

better if one attempts to understand the relationship between religion and culture. Essentially, both the cultural and the religious systems as subsystems of Indian society function within the broad social framework.

22.2 Culture : Meaning and Definition

The concept of culture has rightly received prime attention in sociological research owing to its centrality in understanding the nature and performance of the social arrangement called 'society'. Culture is probably one of the most discussed and debated topics in sociological literature because of its central location in the study of individual in society. This concept has attracted the attention of sociologists, cultural anthropologists, literature scholars and social psychologists among others in understanding human social behaviour. With its multifaceted and multidimensional features, the study of culture has gained increasing importance over the last few decades.

In ordinary speech the word culture is often used to refer to sophisticated tastes in art, literature, music, and so on. The sociological use of this term is much wider, for it includes the entire way of life of a society. Hence the relationship between culture and religion is very close. Culture sometimes is explained in terms of material and non-material. While artifacts such as books, pens, schools, factories, wheels, etc. represent material culture, more abstract creations such as language, ideas, religious belief, customs, myths and so on constitute the non-material culture.

Like the explanations, the definition of the term culture also is wide-ranging. Culture has been defined in broad terms as 'a design for living' (Kluckhohn, 1949) or 'a set of mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, roles, constructions or what may be described in the computer terminology as 'programming for social behaviour' (Geertz, 1978). Both the definitions point out to the vitality and significance of culture in society. Culture points out to the human way of adapting to the environment, a design for living acquired through learning.

Culture is achieved or acquired and not innate or ascribed. It is obtained through human socialisation – the continuous and ongoing process of interaction and learning through which we acquire a personal identity and social skills to adjust and develop. The content of this process of acquisition carried forward from one human collectivity to the next. In other words, culture is transmitted from one generation to another. It should be noted that what kind of individual we become is strongly influenced by enculturation – the immersion in a culture to the point where that particular design for living seems 'only natural' and given inevitably. Most of us do not question our cultural practices and do not view them critically because they are naturally ours and are not external to us.

Every individual is accidentally born into a family and he/she acquires a culture as the member of that particular collectivity. Because the cultural traits are specific to and identifiable within a given community, there cannot be a generalised and universal judgement on the desirability or undesirability of any cultural element or practice. In other words, cultural system is available only to its members and outside agents cannot judge the appropriateness of a culture by standards external to that culture. Justification for or critique of a culture and its practice can meaningfully emerge only from within.

Reflection and Action 22.1

List 10 items of material culture and 5 items of non-material culture which are related to your religion and are found in your society/community. Write an essay on "My Culture and My Beliefs" of about a page. Compare your list and essay with those of other students at your Study Center.

Culture is generally typified as material and non-material culture although that distinction has some notional overlapping. The many different sections that make up a group's design for living - from sophisticated science and technology to toys and children's games; from great works of art and music to kitchen utensils; from sacred ceremonies and worshipping acts to customs like shaking hands or saying 'namaste'; from beliefs about what does and does not taste good; even sex - all are shaped by learning all through life. Learning is of central importance in cultural acquisition as noted earlier. The degree of this learning determines the rate and extent of understanding culture and related course of action within the group. Thus, culture defines the way of life of the individual. Of all the learning applications, acquiring religion has a very special place in individual's life. This provides a position to the individual in his/her social functioning within the group. Therefore, a sociological discussion on religion invariably leads to an elaborate discussion on culture and the reciprocal relationship between these two important elements of society.

Culture consists of all the shared products of human society, both the objects and subjective elements. Culture influences all aspects of individual's living in society. In fact, as Parsons pointed out, the social system and cultural system cannot exist independent of one another and any such distinction is made only for the sake of abstraction and analysis. Culture forms the platform for all other social institutions including, family, kinship, science, economy, polity, and religion.

Religion and culture are closely linked and cannot be separated within the complex social phenomenon called society. As Clifford Geertz observes, 'non-culture human beings do not, in fact, exist, never have existed, and most important, could not in the nature of the case exist. ' The unprecedented success of our species depends on the existence of human culture. We create culture, and culture in turn creates us. Our shared culture is what makes our social life possible. Without a culture transmitted from the past, each new generation would have to solve the most elementary problems of human existence over again. Without culture, we probably would have to invent fire every morning!

Cultures around the world vary widely and each culture is unique in its form and content. Cultural variations can be explained in terms of the functions that particular elements serve in maintaining the social system and in terms of their ecological significance as an adaptation to the total environment around us. It is true that human migration and mobility have lead to cultural exchange and sometimes interaction of people of different cultures for trade and commerce or pilgrimages and so on might also have resulted from diffusion from one culture to another.

In essence, all cultures consist of five basic elements: belief (ideas about how the world operates); values (ideas about the meaning of life); norms and sanctions (guidelines for behaviour) expressive symbols (material representations of ideas and values); and language.

22.3 Religion : Meaning and Definition

Indian culture in its traditional form has accorded great importance to religion. The concept of *dharma* (loosely translated as duty borrowing from its Sanskrit meaning) has been a guiding light to culture of the Hindus in India for thousands of years. Although the term *dharma* is considerably vast and expansive in its territory compared to the term religion, religious dictums have played vital role in shaping up all forms of cultural practices. Often it is pointed out that *vrutti dharma* (occupational duty), *raja dharma* (ruler's duty), *manava dharma* (duty as a human being), *samanya dharma* (general obligations) and the like are not strictly part of the ritualistic function of religion as described earlier.

In the Indian context, *dharma* describes the order of the world and not necessarily to some act referring to supernatural power. For instance, when Upanishads say: '*satyam vada dharmanchara*' (speak truth, follow your duty) the individual is advised to act according to the high values of the cultural system rather than being directed to perform some religious act. In other words, *dharma* is talked about in fulfilling the daily chores and is not always associated with religious acts and performances. Before we go further into this aspect of religion, let us be clear on the sociological concept of religion in its general sense.

India is the homeland for all major world religions. Hinduism is the major religion of the country, but practitioners of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, and a host of other religions of the world also dwell here. However, with the advent of secularism, especially as an integral part of Indian economy, polity, science and culture, major changes have taken place on the Indian religious scenario. In fact, the very connotation of religion has changed in India after we adopted a secular form of governance. The relationship between religion and other institutions of society has radically altered the place of religion in the life of the modern Indian. From a standpoint where it was taken that each member in the society has his/her own dharma, now India conceives of religion as any other social institution that requires some or the other form of social control.

By now we know that religion exists in all societies and cultures. The earlier Western idea that 'only the West was religious and other people have "fallen from grace"' has been proved off beam quite a while ago. Ancient cultures like India, Egypt and China had highly complex and elaborate religious systems thousands of years ago. While theologians spoke of the existence of religions only in some parts of the world, sociologists and anthropologists have always assumed universality of religion as indicated in the classical writings of Comte, Spencer and later on Durkheim and Weber. However, settling the issue of globality of religion has given rise to the difficult problem of why all cultures should have some or the other form of religion and why should it play such a prominent role in individual's life.

There have been some plausible explanations on this topic. An early revelation of God to all peoples has been a conceivable theological explanation that gained prominence during the middle ages. But such an explanation is one outside the arena of scientific investigation, untenable in terms of validity, and thus cannot be accepted by the spirit of rational inquiry. As a scientific alternative to this uncertainty, sociologists have approached this question in a more rational and objective way, often borrowing insights and propositions from other sister disciplines like cultural anthropology, psychology and literature.

Box 22.1: Religion and Psychology

Psychological explanation of the pre-eminence of religion in culture heavily rests on the fact that religion acts as a reliever of stress, anxiety and frustration. All humans undergo stress, and it is argued that in many such instances religion can act as a consoler to reduce the tension of the sufferer. However, we know that in life it is not always the case. As commonly witnessed, in some cases, religion itself may become the source of tension and anxiety, far from acting as a consoler.

Religion is ubiquitous and universal in its presence. Sociologists and anthropologists have provided us with strong evidences to this effect. Prehistoric evidences clearly indicate religious practices dating back to very early time of human collectivity. More and more intense studies increasingly demonstrate that people, originally reported as having no religions, did possess religious beliefs and practices; many early reports in this direction are now

proved wrong, often because of observer's bias or due to superficial contacts with the community under investigation. Even conflict sociology does not discard the ever-present character of religion as a social institution. While Marxian conceptual premise dismisses religion as a mechanism of people with power to control people without power, there is no denial of the existence of different forms of religions in society as such.

Like many terms, the term religion also has changed its earlier plain denotation. The word religion is derived from the Latin word religion meaning 'good faith'. The word also indicates some form of 'ritual' in its original meaning. In general terms, the word religion is understood as a set of institutionalised beliefs and practices that deal with the ultimate meaning of life. Religion, like the essence of culture, provides a blue print for the behaviour of the individual member of society on the basis of principles sustained by divine, supernatural or transcendent order of morality. Religion is something that human beings follow as members of social groups and therefore the study of religion invariably leads to the study of people and culture.

As we have noted already, religion is one such central social institution that is found in all forms of society since the beginning of recorded human history although its form and content have been changing from time to time and from region to region. The great variety of its outward appearance makes it extremely difficult for sociologists to provide a satisfactory definition of the concept. Study of religion looks at the question of how different societies and cultures have different religious beliefs and practices, how cultural and religious differences across the globe can be understood meaningfully and put into their proper context.

In this sense, the study of religion is comparative, since comparisons are made between different religions and different types of religious practices within divergent cultural contexts. In fact, in modern sociological literature, religious studies are frequently labelled 'comparative religion'. There is a trend in contemporary social sciences now to go beyond the general understanding of religion as a universal social institution. Instead, now the attempt is also to understand it from two distinct but reciprocally related approaches: religion as an explanation of religious traditions, and religion as a universal social institution found in all human societies.

22.4 Theoretical Explanation : Bond between Religion and Culture

As social beings, individuals need one another and share the pleasures and pains of life as they occur in the routine course of existence. Some of them can be explained in terms of logic, common-sense and the scientific logic available to him or her from his or her social position, but all of them cannot be logically deduced to his or her satisfaction. Individual, therefore, needs enlightenment for events, happenings and issues that cannot be explained by sheer common-sense or materialistic objectives accessible to her/him. Religion acquires importance in providing explanation to such unsolved enigmas and queries. That is why human beings create supernatural powers and start believing that these powers have created them. He or she also searches answers to inexplicable questions within the realm of the spiritual-mystical and receives moral order from such maxim. Putting it succinctly, individual in society, in a large number of cases, functions at two discrete levels of explanatory orders — the natural and the supernatural: the SACRED and the SECULAR or ordinary.

22.5 Sociological Explanation : The Three Approaches to the understanding of the Sacred and the Secular Order

The sacred and the secular are two important concepts that need to be seriously studied in the course of discussion on religion and culture in their sociological context. People everywhere divide their world into the realms of sacred and profane or secular. In this context three approaches to the sociological explanation of the relationship between religion and society may be discussed here for the benefit of the reader. Three great scholars provide these three explanations: namely (1) Karl Marx, (2) Emile Durkheim, and (3) Max Weber. We shall briefly look into these three theoretical viewpoints to understand the relationship between religion and culture in classical sociology.

- i) **Karl Marx**, the German scholar, has provided a conflict perspective of religion. Marx saw religion as a reflection of society (not as an expression of “primitive” or psychological needs as other theorists of his time presented). Unlike theorists like Durkheim who emphasised the positive functions of religion, Marx stressed the negative side or the dysfunction's of religion as a social institution. Whereas Durkheim saw religion as benefiting all segments of society by promoting social commitment (we shall look into this theoretical position in the next section of this unit), Marx saw religion as serving the interests of the ruling class at the expense of the powerless masses. “Religion,” he wrote, “is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people” (1848/1964, p.42).

Marx argued that just as a painkiller masks the symptoms of disease, silencing the sick person into the illusory belief that he or she is hale and hearty, so religion masks the exploitation of workers, lulling them into the false belief that existing social arrangements are just - or if not just, inescapable. Thus Marx argued that religion as a social institution teaches that the individual's position on earth will be rewarded in heaven. In so doing, it obscures the exploitative tendencies hidden within the class structure and the elite's vested interest in the status quo. In this way, religion becomes a tool in the hands of the 'haves' to exploit and oppress the 'have-nots'.

Marx perceived religion as the personification of alienation: the self-estrangement people experience when they feel they have lost control over social institutions. The term 'alienation' was used by him to describe the modern worker's experience of being nothing more than a 'cog in a machine.' He also employed this concept to describe what he saw as the dehumanising effect of religion. 'The more the worker expends himself in work the more powerful becomes the world of objects which he creates in the face of himself, the poorer he becomes in his inner life, the less he belongs to himself. It is just the same as in religion. The more of himself man attributes to God the less he has left in himself' wrote Marx in one of his famous articles (1844/1963), p.122).

As the above quoted citations indicate Marx's denunciation and rejection of religion in society was total. He argued that only when people give up the illusory happiness of religion will they begin to demand real happiness. In furthering his attack on religion as an exploitative social institution in the clutches of the bourgeois class, he wrote: 'The criticism of religion disillusion man so that he will think, act and fashion his reality as a man who has ... regained his reason' (1844/1963, p.44). He predicted that in a classless society with communistic form of economic order, religion would become irrelevant and unnecessary. Like the capitalist class itself, religion would die its natural death.

Thus, Karl Marx considered religion as an uncalled for and manipulative institution forming an integral part of the exploitative superstructure. Both the religious and cultural institutions transform with the transformation of the economic foundation or the base. Religion and culture are the result of the existing power structure of society and religion would wither away once the class society revolutionises itself into a classless society.

Reflection and Action 22.2

Keeping the ideas of Karl Marx on religion in mind, think carefully about your own religious beliefs and values. Write an essay of two pages on “The Relevance of Religion in my Life.”

Compare your essay with the essay of other students at your Study Center.

- ii) **Emile Durkheim**, the French scholar, is considered as having done pioneering work on sociology of religion. His classic book “Elementary Forms of Religious Life” as well as many other writings stand testimony to his great insights in the field of sociology of religion. Durkheim’s reading of historical and ethnographic literature of his time convinced him that all societies make a clear distinction between the sacred and profane as mentioned above and such a distinction at the societal level is significant in understanding why people in groups and societies behave as they do. His theoretical distinction between the concepts of sacred and the profane stands as a classic contribution to sociology even today.

Durkheim proposed that sacred is anything that inspires awe, reverence or deep respect among the members. It has extraordinary, supernatural and sometimes even dangerous qualities and can usually be approached only through some form of ritual. Such a ritual may be in the form of simple prayer, incantation, hymns, ceremonial cleansing or offering of prey. Any thing can be sacred depending on social acceptance: an idol, rock, tree, book, the sun, the moon, the king or even an engine. The profane, on the other hand, is anything that is regarded as part of the ordinary rather than the supernatural world. Profane is something irreligious, ungodly and unspiritual. All objects in live situations, except those, which are considered by the community as sacred, are profane or sacrilegious objects. Individual’s social behaviour is influenced by his relationship to the sacred and the profane during the course of his everyday life.

Durkheim, like his illustrious predecessors, recognised the universality of religion throughout human history. If religion is universal, he reasoned, it must perform some vital function in human society. Otherwise, this social institution could not have survived for thousands of years. Rejecting psychological explanation on universality of religion as consoler to the frustrated hearts (as mentioned earlier), Durkheim sought to find out the significant causes of religion. He observed that there are certain key social forces that maintain religion in all societies. He proposed that because religion performs some vital social functions, members accept this institution as an important element of social structure.

In the true spirit of objective scientific inquiry, Durkheim began his search of these key social forces in the descriptions of totemism in Australian aboriginal groups (which he believed represented the simplest and earliest form of human society). A totem is a sacred emblem that members of a group or clan treat with reverence and awe. The things chosen as totems (a lizard, a caterpillar, a fish, a tree) are not, in themselves, awe inspiring. But members of a clan see the object as their link to the supernatural. They call themselves by its name, observe taboos in approaching it, and

consider its appearance or behaviour as especially significant having sacred importance.

A totem is both a symbol of god and a symbol of the clan. This has clearly connected the cultural and the religious realms of the society. Durkheim saw this association between the sacred and the clan as a clue to the function of religion. In worshipping its totem, members of the clan were worshipping society. 'The god of the clan, the totemic principle, can be nothing less than the clan itself, personified and represented to the imagination under the visible form of the animal or vegetable which serves as totem' wrote Durkheim (1912/1947, p.206).

Durkheimian logic in this instance has been simple and straightforward. . Many of the sentiments and experiences that people categorise as 'religious' are responses to unseen but powerful social forces. Because they cannot be explained by the ordinary rationalisation, the community provides a supernatural explanation to a natural social force. For example, the religious belief that human beings are the product of divine creation reflects the social fact that we are creatures of our culture and time. The religious sensation of perpetuity reflects the social fact that society existed before we were born and will continue after we die.

In supporting this position, Durkheim remarked: 'We speak a language that we did not invent; we invoke rights that we did not found; a treasury of knowledge is transmitted to each generation that it did not gather itself' (1912/1947, p.212). Going still further, 'is it any wonder', Durkheim asked, 'that we feel as if our lives are designed and controlled by outside forces? That we treat these forces with awe, as if our lives depended upon them? Durkheim strongly held, then, that religious beliefs arise from our experience of social forces. Religion helps us to give this experience a concrete form and expression in a socially acceptable form.

Elaborating on this basic insight, Durkheim argued that the primary function of religion in a society is to create and maintain a 'moral community.' Religious beliefs reinforce group norms and values by adding a sacred dimension to everyday social pressure. In this sense religion acts as a confirmer of cultural system. Religious rituals reinforce social solidarity by bringing people together to reaffirm their common bonds and recall their social heritage. Religion brings people together and unites them as a single community. Participation in rituals heightens the feeling of being part of something larger than oneself. This, in turn, helps individuals to adjust to loss and pain. Durkheim believed that if science were to undermine belief in the sacred, some functional equivalent would arise to replace traditional religion.

Durkheim's arguments regarding the relationship between religion, society and culture have undergone some changes. The Durkheimian conception of the division between the 'sacred' and 'profane' is sharper in the modern societies as compared to the traditional social set-up of the nineteenth century Europe. For example, in the modern Western societies citizens take pride in separating the religious beliefs and practices from their public life. As a result, the governments do not support any one religion against the other in their governance. Religious function, structures and roles segregated from the secular ones as far as possible. In contrast, traditional social set-up does not make any sharp segregation between the sacred and the secular. Hence, in such a system a sharp distinction between the two may look not only unfeasible but also undesirable. Yet, everywhere people do recognise that some occasions, places, persons or times are more sacred than others. The evidences for such recognition are seen in people's collective actions.

- iii) **Max Weber**, the German scholar and sociologist par excellence, has provided an in-depth insight into the nature, functions and consequences of religion as a social institution. Max Weber's interest in religion was inspired to some degree by the arguments of Karl Marx. Like Marx, Weber also devoted much of his intellectual life to investigating the history of capitalism but his concentration was more on the social categories rather than the economic categories although he credited Marx with highlighting the role of economic arrangements in history. But whereas Marx believed that all history could be explained in terms of struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor classes, Weber viewed economy as only one of many influences on the course of human history.

In certain respects, Weber's sociology of religion has been a pathfinder. Contrary to the Marxian notion that religion is an obstacle to social change and progress, Weber argued that religion itself can become a powerful agent of social transformation. Weber's classic work, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1904/1958) has been described as a 'dialogue with the ghost of Karl Marx' (Coser, 1977, p.228). This model sociological classic still remains as a thesis in the comprehensive understanding of religion, a powerful social institution meeting not only supernatural needs but also performing pecuniary functions of society i.e. being closely related with the economic aspect of society.

Weber began this work by observing that in countries with both Protestant and Catholic populations, the business leaders, the bankers, even the highly skilled workers were 'overwhelmingly Protestant'. Weber tried to find out the sociological reasons for this unusual phenomenon. He asked questions regarding specifics such as what is there about Protestant beliefs and practices that fosters economic enterprise in comparison to other communities? Weber found an answer in the Calvinist phase of the Protestant Reformation. His explanation focused on two elements of Protestant belief: the redemptive value of work and worldly asceticism.

Weber found that the doctrine of predestination was central to Calvinist thinking. The Catholic Church taught that the route to salvation led through the church; that one earned a place in heaven through participation in the sacraments (mass, confession, penance, and so on). The Calvinist belief that God decided whether an individual would be 'elected to the saints' or 'damned to hell' much before the person was born, and that nothing he or she did on earth could alter that predetermination of God's will. This has helped Protestants to act freely and unchained individuals from the bonds of the church. But this belief also created intense anxiety in people's minds. How could a person know whether he or she was one of God's chosen few to be 'elected' to the heaven? The Calvinist answer was simple. This is clearly indicated in one's own lifetime through his/her worldly achievements. Good works might not earn one salvation (as Catholics believed), but they did ease the fear of damnation. As the Bible states, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings" (Proverbs xxii, 29).

The Calvinist conviction in the redemptive value of hard work was combined with what Weber called 'worldly asceticism.' Calvinists condemned self-indulgence, the pursuit of luxury and lavishness, and the pleasures of the flesh. But they also rejected the belief that one could earn salvation by giving away one's possessions and living in poverty (something they associated with Catholic monks). What, then, was the successful entrepreneur to do with his wealth? Calvinism's answer here again was straightforward: engage in savings and put those profits to work. Calvin 'did not wish to impose mortification on the man of wealth, but the use of his means for necessary and practical things' wrote Weber (1904/1958, p.171). And so the Protestant ethic, with its peculiar combination of hard work and self-denial, was born. For centuries,

the Catholic Church had condemned the pursuit of profits, especially through money lending and trade. Calvinism elevated saving, investing, rational calculation, and profit making to a moral duty. Indirectly, then, Calvinism gave capitalism moral sanction and created a pool of dedicated entrepreneurs. In this way a religious ethos have given rise to a type of new economic system and a new way of looking at life. Religion, economy and culture – three major social institutions – have come together, mutually influencing each other in the process of creating a new way of living and thinking.

Weber did not maintain that these beliefs alone could explain why capitalism emerged in Protestant Europe rather than, say, China or India. Rather he saw Protestant beliefs as one of many factors that contributed to the rise of capitalism. Although he disagreed with Marx's economic determinism, he did not set out to disprove the role of economics in history. He stated: 'It is not ... my aim to substitute for one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and history' (1904/1958, p.183) Rather his aim was to show that history could not be reduced to one-factor explanations and that religion could be an agent of social and cultural change.

In the conclusion to his book, Weber described the spirit of capitalism and the near-worship of rational instrumentalism in modern times as an 'iron cage' in which 'the technical and economic conditions of machine production... determine the lives of all individuals.' He continued, 'In the field of (capitalism's) highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport.' The religious spirit that had inspired the growth of capitalism has fled the cage, leaving behind 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart.' For Weber, a society in which human activities and relationships are governed by rational calculation and 'economic compulsions' is devoid of meaning. In this sense, a moral order, a system of ethos, which transcends the sheer pleasure principle of wealth and comforts, is something Weber aspired for the modern society. In so doing, Weber endeavoured to combine an elevated arrangement of culture with moral principles, linking religion and culture at a higher level of synthesis.

Some Other Sociological Approaches to the Understanding of Culture and Religion

Beside Marx, Durkheim and Weber, there have been other sociological perspectives explaining the nature of religion within the cultural framework. Most of these explanatory schemes examining the relationship between society, culture and religion suffer from the inadequacies of ignoring either the intellectual or the emotional content. The early evolutionists were generally misled by assuming that religion was solely a product of human mind and thinking. In this sense, they considered religion and spiritual order as purely personal and private affair. For example, psychoanalytic theory has considered religion purely as a product of human experience based on trauma or emotional pressure. We have noticed in earlier paragraphs how Durkheim rejected this explanation in his elucidation. The functional theory if you recall the previous unit 21, on the other hand, understood religion as having a relationship with virtually every human activity. This explication is so broad and extensive that specificity in analysis is lost. Owing to this difficulty of diffuseness, functional exposition with an eclectic viewpoint has failed to produce concrete development proposals in terms of a comprehensive social theory of religion. Structuralism (please refer back to unit-21) seems to have suffered by its heavy and superfluous stress on intellectualism although it has attempted to offer an alternative account to functionalist explanation of religion as meeting functional needs of the society.

Clifford Geertz, the American social anthropologist, has tried to resolve the problem of extremity in terms of emotion versus intellectual bias in the

explanation of religion. Geertz presented a scheme that requires focus on both the rational and the emotional content of religion. The term *ethos* is used to denote the feelings or the personality aspects that are a part of religion. The concept of worldview is employed to account for human reason. According to him the '*ethos*' is made intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life implied by the actual state of affairs, at least as perceived by a particular '*worldview*'. In turn, one's worldview must be made emotionally acceptable by being presented as an image of actual state of affairs. In this way, Geertz proposes, harmony between the emotional and intellectual aspects of religion can be conceived.

Looking at the development of religion as a social phenomenon historically, in a number of large and heterogeneous societies, a great change took place during a few hundred years before the Christian era. This was especially true with large societies like India, China, Egypt or Babylonia. This was the time when great religions namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism (and later its offshoots Christianity and Islam) emerged in the world. This has resulted in the change in the nature of human relationship to the physical and social worlds.

Such a change consisted of separating the idea of natural world from the idea of spiritual world. Instead of gods and supernatural powers intervening in the world around us routinely, they found place in an entirely different realm: heaven and hell, another sphere of reality, a world of ideal principles. This supernatural world stood as an ideal to the norms and values prevalent in culture, thus establishing a firm affiliation between the two. Needless to point out that the consequences of this change were far reaching for both the members and social institutions.

Settling the issue of the universality of religion as mentioned above raised the difficult question of why religion should be a part of all cultures. The explanation provided by Durkheim in his distinction between the sacred and the profane (discussed in earlier paragraphs) has not been accepted in social sciences fully. Anthropologists attempted to explore issues and concepts such as (1) sacred and secular (2) *mana* and taboo (3) priests and shamans and the like in this regard. Practices in health care and education have been closely linked to religion in many societies and these issues were also closely looked into. Traditional medicine men, witches and sorcerers have also been cultural part of society in a number of instances. Their ability to offer gratification to their group members was conceived as a possible explanation of the issue.

A number of societies have attempted not to use common sense and rational logic in interpreting religion as a part of culture. Supernatural powers of religion was used as an extraordinary elements in such an analysis. In those societies both magical and religious beliefs are frequently regarded as rational. They are treated as either relics for the past or the product of people with a pre-logical/illogical mindset. A common question in cultural studies has been: Why do people continue such practices even when desired goals are unfulfilled? Is it not irrational when people continue to pour water on '*lingam*' or perform the practice of getting '*mules married*' even when such acts fail to bring rain? The question demands not a logical explanation bereft of societal context. It demands a culturally acceptable answer instead.

While rationalisation within cultural framework is characteristics of religion, parts of it are also rational explanations of events. Mythology is particularly noteworthy as explanation for questions about why, when, and where. Mythological explanations some times provide clues to repressed feelings due to cultural inhibitions. In this sense certain mythological practices may be considered as collective dream of a given culture in which people express feelings they cannot otherwise show. For the people involved religion allows

them to play with otherwise unexplained feelings kept at the unconscious level.

Sir James Frazer argued that religion is an integrated substructure of the culture. His argument that religion evolved from magic with a projected evolution of religion to science is not accepted by other social scientists. His arguments have been persuasive for a wide audience though of lesser concern in sociology and anthropology. Another evolutionist Herbert Spencer approached the problem of determining the origin of religion through examination of Australian aborigines who were considered the most primitive of living cultures. Since these natives paid much attention to their ancestors, Spencer reasoned that heroic ancestors were remembered and glorified by descendants. Over time, such grand parents assumed godlike qualities. In short long-dead ancestors became the realm of the sacred. These spirits began to govern the weather, health, education, family life and other vital areas of culture. Putting it succinctly, Spencer proposed that human beings intellectually created their religion, and that they progressed through rational, evolutionary stages. Incidentally, Spencer also noted a religious and political connection. He contented that while the fear of other living people was basic for political organisation, a fear of the dead was foundation of religious control.

Other theories on the origin and function of religion are also far from being adequate in their explanation. The historical method, psychological theories, functional theories of religion (especially of Malinowski and Radcliff-Brown) and structural theories have also been only partial in explaining the origin, the functions and the structure of religion as a social institution within the cultural milieu. It may be pointed out that most theories of religion are inadequate and suffer by ignoring either the intellectual or the emotional content. Of all the theoretical explanations, Clifford Geertz's explanation seems to be comprehensive. Although Geertz has not provided a thoroughly satisfying account of the mutual relation between ethos and world view, his presentation forces attention to both affect and thought in any analysis of religious phenomenon.

22.6 Culture and Religion in India

Indian sociologists have developed concepts such as Sanskritisation, parochialisation, little tradition, great tradition, and a number of concepts to explain how religious ideas and ideals have been guiding Indian society in depth.

India is a diverse and heterogeneous society in terms of culture as well as religious beliefs. The religious beliefs, forms of worship, objects of reverence, rituals, ceremonies of the people, places of pilgrimage and sacred books are all varied and numerous. But all of them are profound in their influence over the development of individual's personality as well as the feeling of community. The secondary institutions within religion in India include rites and rituals, forms and objects of worship, and organised groups for the propagation of religion. Each one of these factors influences the culture of the common people considerably. In this sense religious mores form firm foundation to the preservation of certain basic elements in the culture.

Religious groups in India, especially those adhering to major religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism, have lived in partial harmony, together forming an Indian culture over the last several hundreds of years. As Mahatma Gandhi once said about Hinduism, 'it is more than a religion; it is a way of life.' The Indian culture enjoys the fact that Hinduism, its most ancient and powerful religious group, pervades every aspect of individual's life making this culture a highly complex one.

Box 22.2: Culture and Religion

In the Indian context, the distinction between culture and religion cannot be constructed sharp unlike in the Western, Judeo-Christian cultural context. In India, the member of this society is simultaneously both religious and non-religious. It is often said that Hinduism is more than a religion. It is a way of life based on justice and harmony. Culture constantly strives to maintain social solidarity and harmony between its members. Indian religious ethos also constantly aims at this goal. As the famous saying in Sanskrit reads, 'for those who are noble in character, the entire world is the home' (*udara charithanamthu vasudhaiva kutumbakam*).

Indians, mainly Hindus, over the years have developed two streams of public life: *asthika* or the 'believer' and *nastika* or the 'non-believer.' The complex Hindu theology is woven around the abstract spiritual concepts such as Brahma, atman, paramatma, punarjanma, karma, papa, and the like and they have lent an influencing hand to the nature, structure and functioning of pan-Indian culture.

Religion and culture work towards the same goal of four cardinal principles of humankind. These principles are:

- 1) Survival of the species
- 2) Security in the life span of individuals
- 3) Material prosperity for ensuring survival and security, and
- 4) Continuous expansion of the scope of wholesome living, and mental progress for unfolding the potential of every individual.

22.7 Conclusion

Religion, all over the world, is basically a matter of faith and emotion. Although there are religious leaders who argue otherwise, it is for certain that religion is not an issue to be dealt with in terms of information, reason and logical judgement. Culture, on the other hand, works within as well as outside the realm of faith and emotion. As Merton pointed out, there are 'cultural universals' and many elements of culture are found in almost all societies. The very fact, that religion is based on trust in some supernatural power, and that there are 'believers' and 'nonbelievers' within this construction proves its highly emotive nature of operation. In spite of these basic structural differences, religion and culture have many important goals in common.

Each one of these four standards is expected to lead the humankind to a healthier more secure and better future. Both religion and culture strive to achieve such a future to their members. **The survival of their members** to both these social institutions essentially means their own survival. That culture is considered supreme which leads to the welfare of all; in the same way, that religion is an eternal religion which hopes and prays for the well being of all species (The Hindu religious saying which is also reflected in the traditional Indian culture is '*sarve janah sukino bavanthu sarve bhadrani pashyanthu.....*'). In the same way, **life security and longer life span of the members** is the desired goal of both the cultural and the religious systems. Immediately next is the principle of **material prosperity of the members**. Ultimately a cultural system or a system of religion survives only when and if its members are 'healthy, wealthy and wise'. The individual members of a religion, as in culture, pray for and look forward to be blessed with corporeal and material wealth along with mental peace. Finally, members of both culture and religion look forward for a happy, peaceful and contented life and opportunity to unfold the human potential to its fullest extent. Functioning towards the fulfillment of these fundamental tenets of human life is the basic objective of both religion and culture. There is no scope for the nonbeliever

to assess and criticise religion unless he/she is an integral, internal member of that given culture or religion. Culture comprises of both the sacred and the secular. In that sense, culture covers a larger canvas on which religion finds a small but critical role.

As we have entered the twenty-first century, our problems and priorities have become divergent and individualistic. Today, human society in general comes upon three predispositions operating concurrently. They point at certain problems and possible solutions.

The first tendency is the homogenisation of culture in the global scale, along with the globalisation of economy and polity. Second one is the assertion of the homogenised culture in different configurations of human society, usually in respective nation-states. Thirdly and very significantly, the demand of ethnic groups, at discerning level of their power potential within a nation state for the recognition of their 'minority' status cultures.

In a document on culture, the International Centre for Development (1979) has abridged the essential elements of the institution of culture at the generic level. This precise statement would help us to sum up our understanding of the relationship between culture and religion succinctly. The precise statement is that "Culture is an aggregate of values and traditions which is deeply linked to the everyday life of the people, and in that sense, it is a matrix of perception which allows one to apprehend the world." This statement aptly summarises Indian position on the relationship between culture and religion.

In India, religion, as an integral part of culture in general, provides a foundation for mores of society even today. Hence, we find that since time immemorial, religious sanctions are sought for doing certain desirable patterns of behaviour by the individual in society. Hence, they become a part of both the cultural and the religious systems in India in the form of mores. In so doing, violation of the pattern of behaviour then becomes violation of the order of God-the Almighty. It also receives reprimand from the society. Thus many taboos in our culture have religious sanctions, for instance, the taboo against eating beef among the Hindus has precise and definite religious sanction. Hinduism treats the killing of holy cow as an unpardonable sin. In the same vein, in an agrarian society, killing cows leads to both economic as well as social disaster, and hence, Indian culture does not accept.

To conclude, religious system and cultural system in India have a lot of overlapping in their intent and consequences. Needless to point out that Indian religion promises 'ideals' to its believer whereas Indian culture concentrates more on the 'actual'. The uneven and stratified system of the Indian religious order seemingly contrasts with the relatively flat and less uneven cultural system of modern India.

22.8 Further Reading

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Bainbridge, 1985 : The Future of Religion, University of California Press : Berkeley.

Unit 23

Cohesive and Divisive Dimensions of Religion

Contents

- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 Religion and its Various Dimensions
- 23.3 Rivalry, Schism and Integration
- 23.4 Religions in India : A Unity in Diversity
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- 23.6 Multiple interpretations in Indian Religions
- 23.7 Conclusion
- 23.8 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- describe the various dimensions of religion;
- discuss the different aspects like rivalry, schism and integration of religions;
- explain how and why religions in India provide a unity in diversity; and
- outline, in brief, the multiple interpretations found in religions in India.

23.1 Introduction

In this paper, an attempt will be made to examine religion with reference to its capacity to unite people and also divide them. The references will be mainly drawn from Indian society, although occasional comparisons with other societies will find a place in this paper. Broadly speaking, religion stands for social solidarity, harmony or unity of mankind. No religion upholds hate, violence or imposition of doctrine on unwilling people. Yet religions in all parts of the world have witnessed hatred or acts of violence in which both individuals and groups have taken part. The reasons for religious strife are various; some of which will be mentioned in this unit.

23.2 Religion and its Various Dimensions

The transit from one historical epoch to another changes in patterns of living and types of production, priestly manipulations, and political or social compulsions have had a bearing on religion. As religions are social phenomena, they not only impinge on society but are in turn susceptible to social pressures. But the modalities of conflict have varied. The pantheistic religions, which believe in a variety of gods, goddesses or sacred forces, have generally remained tolerant of differences in belief and practice¹. Shintoism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism are pantheistic. In Japan, Buddhism has flourished along with Shintoism. In China, Taoism and Buddhism have existed side by side for long periods. India has always been noted for its tolerance. Since in pantheism there is the recognition of validity of different approaches to religious truth, there is very little to fight for or against a particular creed.

In the monotheistic religions of West Asia, such as, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, there is no room for an alternative set of gods or sacred beliefs. Hence, the non-believers were treated as outsiders. Even here there was accommodation of religious diversities: for ex. Jerusalem in West Asia has

been a common holy place for all the three groups. The Caliphs who ruled from 7th to 13th century A.D. were tolerant of non-Islamic groups such as Jews and Christians. These minorities were granted special rights to follow their religious systems. However, monotheism lays an exclusive claim to truth. The outsiders may be tolerated but they are believed to be pursuing false doctrines or false gods. It is this attitude which often led to the bitter persecution of the non-believers. All over Europe, Christians never forgave Jews because they had crucified Jesus in connivance with Roman rulers. The Muslims have generally regarded Christians as infidels or idol worshippers (as Catholics and Orthodox Christians worship images or icons). The crusades (11th to 13th Century A.D. and the Spanish Inquisition 13th Century A.D) were large-scale events in which religious intolerance played a central part.

Although the pantheistic faiths do not persecute others on grounds of doctrine, yet violence can break out due to other reasons. Nationalistic or political considerations can make rulers ruthless. The Great Wall of China was started to be built in 3rd Century BC. One of the Chinese rulers who continued this work sent thousands of Buddhist monks to do forced labour; many of them died due to hard work, hunger or lack of nutrition. A Hindu ruler of Bengal Shashanka (circa 6th Century AD) destroyed a number of Buddhist monasteries in eastern India and drove out the monks. Although Buddhism stands for peace the rulers in Buddhist countries (Sri Lanka, Thailand etc) have often waged violent wars to quell rebellion or suppress political dissidents. Sri. Aurobindo² was critical of Buddhism in India for a different reason. The adoption of pacifism, by the Kshatriya groups in India under the aegis of Buddhism, led to the decline of martial spirit. However, outside India Buddhism has supported vigorous martial traditions. The Samurai in Japan are an example. At the same time, both in China and Japan monks extensively developed martial arts (Kung fu, Karate, etc), to defend themselves against warlords.

At this juncture it is to be remembered that religion per se does not support violence. The holy texts such as Torah, Bible and Koran stand for tolerance and goodwill. But non-religious factors have often incited violence against believers. The Nazis who ruled Germany (1933 – 1945) put to death six million Jews in different parts of Europe, ostensibly because the latter were anti-patriotic or anti-German. The real reason was that the Nazi rule in Germany drew upon the popular support to anti-Semitism. Similarly, the rulers of Communist China occupied Tibet in the late nineteen fifties. In the subsequent periods they destroyed 3,000 Buddhist monasteries, killed thousands of unarmed monks, and destroyed its artistic heritage³. The ostensible reason was that the Tibetans were rebels against the Chinese State. The real reason was their misguided hatred against Buddhism. If we look at these non-religious factors, it becomes clear that secular violence (war or battle to gain control of territory) is much more severe than religious violence.

A common view is that religions in different parts of the world have been legitimizers of tyranny or misrule by kings. But the evidence suggests that religion per se is not conservative or radical, oppressive or liberalising. In the 5th Century AD, Bodhidharma (the monk from South India) reached China and spread Buddhism. He stayed in the Emperor's court for a few years but left it and settled down in countryside. He rallied around him the oppressed peasants of China against the Chinese warlords. Early Christianity mobilised the workers, artisans and slaves to withstand Roman oppression. Many Christians were killed by the Roman rulers for their suspected disloyalty to Roman Empire. But in 16th Century Europe the Catholic Church connived with the brutal oppression of Mexicans by the Spanish colonial settlers. The Christian churches also condoned the European slave trade in the 18th and 19th Centuries, when millions of Africans were uprooted and sent to far-off colonies in North America and other places to work on plantations. By contrast, the more modern radical movements among the working classes in the West and in Latin America, have

been led by religious reformers. In 19th Century England, Protestants supported working class struggles⁴. In Latin America, the Catholic pastors have joined the struggle of workers against oppression. The Communist rule in Poland was brought down in 1990 by the protests of trade unions led by a Catholic political leader.

In Indian society, religions have divided as well as united people. Although religious persecution – as it is known elsewhere – is absent in India, its sects – Shaiva, Vaishnava and Shakta – have often been hostile to each other. In the more recent times the “communal” conflict has also come to the fore. There are also various differences in dietary habits, patterns of living, linguistic or cultural usages, which have led to a gulf between one religious group and the other. For example, the Vaishnavites wore the head tilak to symbolise lord Vishnu in horizontal lines, while the Shaivites apply vertical lines on their foreheads to symbolise lord Siva. Both these sects had a long history of struggle in India. In the South Shaivites were once persecuted by the Jains in antiquity; in turn Shaivities persecuted the Vaishnavas. In these instances, the reason for violence was greed (i.e., control of a holy place for gain) or the clamour for securing power and privilege in the royal court. In spite of this there has been a trend towards bridging cultural differences among the people. In this regard, noted reformers like Shankara, collectively built monuments like temples or other places of worship and the cultural unification through pilgrimages have made way for a national unity. There is no doubt that Indian religions have shown much resilience to adapt themselves to new exigencies and have emerged stronger at present than in the past. It is, therefore, a fact that the cohesive force of Indian religions is stronger than their divisive susceptibilities.

Reflection and Action 23.1

You have just read in the above paragraph that - “There is no doubt that Indian religions stronger than their divisive susceptibilities”. Do you sub-scribe to the same view as the author or do you believe otherwise. If so, why? Write down your own opinion about why you agree or disagree with the author in about two pages.

Discuss your writing with other students at your Study Center. If possible, you may request the Academic Counsellor to organise a debate on this topic.

Before concluding this section, a few words may be said about the sectarian developments within religion. The sects in the West have arisen mainly because of the desire on the part of a breakaway group to secure religious freedom. The Catholic church’s long-standing hegemony in religious, political and social spheres was effectively challenged by the Protestants in 16th Century Europe under the leadership of Martin Luther. The church had become corrupt. Its pastors frequently lapsed from the vow of celibacy. The Popes used to grant “Bulls” (certificates) which relieved the donors to the church of their sins. Instead of becoming a centre of spiritualism the church had become worldly or materialistic. While in public the Catholic Church upheld “otherworldliness”, it had come under the seize of feudal families of Europe, which sent Bishops to the church to gain control over its vast estates and other properties.

As Protestant movement flourished in the post 16th Century Europe, the Catholic Church lost its hold on people in Europe; but it gained converts in Asia, Latin America and Africa in the subsequent centuries. The rivalries between the two groups were very intense; as a rule, the Catholics used the power of state to persecute Protestants and Vice Versa. In England, Germany, Netherlands and Nordic centuries, the Protestants have gained upper hand, while in Italy, Spain and Portugal, the Catholics have continued to remain dominant. To this day, Northern Europe has remained the centre of Protestantism, while Southern Europe is Catholic.

Box 23.1: Buddhism and Jainism

It is a sociologically significant phenomena that both Buddhism and Jainism were led by religious leaders who were of Kshatriya origin. They both led a protest movement against orthodox Hindu religion and religious practices, such as the rigidities of the caste system of social stratification. Both these religious sects are founded on profound religious philosophy and moral code. They do not have the concept of God as central to their belief. Both Gautam Buddha and Mahavira, religious leaders of Buddhism and Jainism, respectively, were considered to be 'avataars' of God rather than Gods themselves. Both the sects have later divided and subdivided, based on their own internal differences.

In India, Buddhism and Jainism were some of the major sects which gained public recognition. They rejected some aspects of Vedic culture (animal sacrifice etc.) but broadly concurred with Vedantic (Upanishadic) culture. As such there was no radical separation between these sects and the earlier religion. Louis Renou⁵ has stated that the sects have provided dynamism to Indian culture by catering to its ethnic diversity. While religious doctrine can be abstract to ordinary people, the sects are the tangible reality. Most believers identify themselves with one sect or the other; their hopes and aspirations are shaped by the charismatic religious leaders who found the sects. Anyone who has visited Gujarat can notice the prestige of Vallabhacharya and Swami Narayan sects in that area. Likewise, there are followers of Shankaradeva in Assam or Chaitanya in Bengal, Kabir or Raidas in North India. Renou writes: "In contrast with popular Hinduism, which became a little stagnant and stale, the sect has become an instrument of progress. Reforms are of two kinds, sometimes strictness in the performance of religious practices is recommended; sometimes protest is registered against social scales and prohibitions in order that every man may have access to the religious life"⁶.

To sum up, Indian society offers fascinating or disturbing aspects of religions to the observer. There is bigotry or "touch-me attitude", which borders on the irrational element. But there are also the throngs of pilgrims who traverse the land to bathe at a holy river or visit a temple, utterly unmindful of the fact that they are with strangers speaking different languages. A confusion must be clarified here. For a long time in popular literature sects and castes have been treated as same. Both Vivekananda and Aurobindo have noted that castes were social frameworks designed to shelter productive processes (agriculture, industry and artisanship). By contrast, sects are fellowships of faith; the members of the sect are guided by their guru or acharya and not by rules of purity and pollution. In a satsang all caste prohibitions are laid at rest; the participants share the same shelter, eat the same food and address each other on equal terms. The Varkari sect of Maharashtra is a good example of this. Every year during the summer, thousands of people from different parts of the state or outside the state move in bands of pilgrims to Pandharpur (where Vishnu is worshipped). All the Bhaktas are treated alike, irrespective of their previous background, during the Yatra. Usually caste factor is significant for the members of the sect with reference to property inheritance or marriage; but free interaction with others is expected from a sect member. To reiterate, in spite of some common features caste is based on a hierarchy, while the sect is based on a fellowship of equals⁷.

23.3 Rivalry, Schism and Integration

In all religions of the worlds, schisms have arisen from time to time to fulfill some needs. If the followers of particular religious group feel deprived mentally or spiritually, they tend to break away from the rest and form a separate group. Charismatic leaders initiate mobilisation of these discontented people into new religious channels. Disputes over doctrines, pressure from nationalistic or ethnic needs and also the march of time, are other factors, which have favoured the formation of new sects. In Europe the sectarian strife has

adversely affected religious unity. To this day the Northern Ireland has faced disunity because of hostility between Catholics and Protestants. In Netherlands and Germany even trade unions in industries are affiliated to the above two groups. In Islam, the Sunnis and Shias are the major sects, while there are many smaller ones. Nationalistic rivalries and doctrinal differences have led to a separatist tendency. While Egypt and Saudi Arabia are the leaders of Sunnis, Iran is the leading Shia center.

Box 23.2: What is a sect?

Sect is a religious group that represents the people who dissent from the interpretation of the doctrine from an established church and as a communion of religious brotherhood which has a well defined creed. For eg. the Protestants from the Catholic religion. Its ideal type is a contrast to that of the Church even though it may share some traits with the latter. Unlike the Church, the membership of the sect is not compulsory. It is a voluntary, relatively exclusive and often qualified ritually.

The sect does not stand for unqualified universal conversion. God's grace is not for all, nor is it bestowed automatically. It is won by the individual's personal faith and ethical behaviour. Therefore, the sect has a disdain for 'the refined verbal spinning of ecclesiastical theologians' (Johnson 1968 : Chap. 16) Quoted in ESO-05 : Society and Religion, Block 3 Religion And Related Aspects, pp. 9, BDP, IGNOU).

In India too, there have often been hostile encounters among the Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Shakta components among the Hindus. The Kumbha Mela festival is held periodically in four places, namely, Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik. Previously, there used to be fights between the Nagas (Shaivites) and Bairagis (Vaishnavites) belonging to different monastic affiliations (akhadas)⁸. Although now the Mela is peaceful, there are underlying tensions between the different sects. These armed groups, namely Nagas (shaivites) and Bairagis (Vaishnavites) were created in order to safeguard Hinduism against the encroachments from Islam or Christianity. But they were often misguided by the zealots who provoked them to fight against one another, although they belonged to the same religious stream in Indian society.

The religious schisms have also inspired movements to integrate the belief systems. In the West it is known as the Ecumenical Movement: it seeks to bring together on a common forum the three major segments namely Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox Christians. It is also a response to the challenge of secularism. This movement not only focuses on the common spiritual elements in these different religious affiliations, but also seeks to provide a bulwark against growing atheism in the West. In Islam Sufism has brought together, Muslims and non-Muslims (Christians, Hindus etc.,) who are inclined to believe in the oneness of mankind. In the North African states (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), the official Islam and Sufism are often at loggerheads, but each in a way has integrated the believers. The official Islam has organised the literates, urban merchants and administrators, while Sufism has a hold on the folk-tribal groups of the rural hinterland.⁹

In India, Shankara (8th Century A.D.) took a decisive step in bringing together the sects under a common programme for rebuilding the Hindu society. He enjoined upon the Hindus to follow Panchayatana system (worship of five deities chosen freely by the individuals). He unified in his smarta tradition the six sects, namely Saura, Skanda, Ganapatya, Shakta, Shaiva and Vaishnava sects. He felt that such unifications were necessary to control the centrifugal forces. To this day smarta groups are found all over India from Kashmir to Rameshwaram. Ramanujaa (11th century A.D.) preached Vaishnava Bhakti and drew followers from both Brahmins and non – Brahmins in Tamilnadu. The great Bhaktas of the North, Nanak, Tulsidas, Kabir, Dadu and Raidas, are well known for building up a spiritual fellowship. The highly charismatic Vaishnava saint

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (16th century) had a massive following in eastern India (Bengal and Orissa) which included Hindus, tribals and Muslims. Swami Narayan (1781-1830) in Gujarat¹⁰ has stated that he drew inspiration from the teachings of Ramanuja; he preached a Vaishnava doctrine which was noted for its puritanism. He carried forward the mission of Ramanuja by drawing into his fold a variety of castes, including the then backward castes of Bhatiya, Lohana and Patel and the tribals.¹¹ He conferred a high spiritual status on his followers by calling them “ Brahminised Saints”. (Vivekananda once remarked that all the followers of Nanak were Brahmins. The implication of this is that unlike the caste in a sect status is conferred on the basis of merit).

The message of sectarian philosophy is simple and clear. Indians need not destroy customs (such as idol-worship and caste). At the same time attempts should be made to transcend our social barriers without renouncing them. In fact, the three noted Indian thinkers, namely, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Coomaraswamy have stated that the caste system which was based on mutual interdependence gave stability to Indian society. The Indians need not discard the past but they have to redefine it in terms of the present. Further, it is to be noted that while Vedas (which were orally transmitted) were accessible only to a few, the Upanishads (Gita included), Epics and Puranas were freely accessible to most people. Common people in villages and towns across the country came to know about them, through the itinerant religious preachers who gave an exposition to them in public.

Box 23.3: Hindu Orthodoxy and Caste Structure

However, one must not forget that orthox Hindusim had its regidities which were expressed in the caste structure which, from the modern day point of view was based on exploitation and torture of a large majority of the dalits or sudras by a small population of upper castes. If caste mobility was possible, it was possible only as a social group to a limited degree. Otherwise, we have the example of Eklavya, whose thumb was cut off so that he may not learn the art of archery and compete with the Kshatriya Princes.

It is not a surprise that several religious sects arose as a protest to remove the evils of caste system and religious orthodoxy. From Jainism, Buddhism, Bhakti movement to Sikhism all the sects have arisen to correct the wrongs of the earlier social structure.

More than anything else, the Indians- Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims – have been engaged in a tangible religious experience called pilgrimage¹³. All through the year the ordinary men, women and children travel across the country to visit a holy shrine or bathe in a sacred river. The sacred rivers and places of worship (temples, dargahs and gurudwaras) are open to all, irrespective of caste or rank.

Box 23.4 Some Aberrations

However, some temples like Lord Jagganath temple in Puri prohibits the entry of foreigners. Mosques generally do not allow the entry of women to conduct prayers except perhaps in Kashmir. Even the Ayyappa Temple does not allow women to enter their premises. In remote areas of Regasthan there have been cases reported of erstu *****

During pilgrimage the caste norms are entirely suspended. For example, when numerous people take bath in Ganga at Prayag or Haridwar or throng the places of worship (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) it is just not possible to identify them on the basis of their rank or privilege. They are totally unaware of differences in skin colour, gender or age group. They are in a state of euphoria in which all participants appear to be equal. The temples at Tirupati, Vaishnodevi, Dwaraka, Rameshwaram, etc are entirely free for anybody to

enter. The public places of worship in India (Hindu, Sufi or Sikh) have placed no restrictions on anyone. Victor Turner has used the term “anti-structure” to describe pilgrimage which suspends all structural barriers (caste, class and ethnicity). His view is that every society has antistructures, which absorb the stresses produced by the structures. ¹⁴

To sum up the integrative enterprise, both in terms of the past and present three levels can be identified” (a) the intellectual orientation provided by the rationalistic Buddhism and Jainism; b) the emotional orientation of the Bhakti groups; and (c) the participatory orientation of pilgrimage, India is not only characterised by extreme ethnic diversity but also gives rise to countless groups or sub-groups, which are ready to break away from each other for even a trivial reason. But the above-mentioned factors of integration have imparted a unique stability to India, especially in cultural terms. Breaking away is good to the extent that it gives rise to creative expressions in religion, but integration is also good because it reinforces the underlying unity of the Indian nation. Even the hotly debated communalism has no real roots in the Indian culture; it has been clearly an offshoot of colonial policies which divided people through deliberative ideology or the ideology of divide and rule, and administrative fiat. Indian religions have only a tenuous connection with the Indian political projections, which appear to be Western inspired. To give an instance, R.S.S. which claims to be a cultural body has no genetic connection with the religious akhadas which have survived from the past. It trains its volunteers through a Western type of drill. By contrast the modern training centers in Kung Fu (China) and Karate (Japan) have shown a remarkable continuity of the ancient tradition. The Shaolin temple in China (which was founded by the monk Bodhidharma in 5th Century A.D.) has remained the centre of Kung Fu up to the present, although this country has been under communist rule for decades. Careful analysis will uncover the motives which have inspired disinformation about modern India.

23.4 Religion in India : A Unity in Diversity

The prehistoric cave paintings discovered in different parts of India, and the ancient burial chambers known as dolmen and tumuli, have revealed that the folks and tribes which in the past inhabited the subcontinent were inspired by religion. The Vedic culture which flourished in India in the three millennia before Christ no doubt absorbed many of the tribal beliefs and practices. Religions in India do not reject the legacy of the past but absorb it or modify it. The Vedic settlements, which were located on the banks of Saraswati (now extinct) in the northwestern India, pursued a sacrificial cult in which the celestial figures like Indra, Varuna, Surya and Agni were worshipped. The observation of Max Muller that Hindus worship these personifications of nature because they are in awe of their might is not correct. There was a reciprocal relationship between man and god. In fact, it was in the West Asian religions that people were in awe of the transcendental god (Jehovah or Allah). In the post-Vedic development known as Bhaktism, instead of fear the man and god are bound in an affectionate relationship (for ex. Krishna is the beloved of Radha or kin of Arjuna). (Islam’s stand was modified in Sufism where god is the beloved of the faquir).

The Vedic culture was centered around a Potlatch type of a system in which valuables like honey, silk, cereals were burnt. Animals also were sacrificed in order to appease the gods. In turn the gods were expected to bestow on the sacrificer healthy progeny, ensure good rains and crops and success in warfare. The implication of this was that the available surplus was distributed to the kith and kin and the invitees in the form of gifts. Karl Polyani has stated that in a reciprocal economy surplus is not accumulated. Hence, there was no class formation in it. The Vedic society (in spite of Varna framework) was a folk society i.e., without structural inequality. In the post-Vedic Society of India,

there were numerous republican states (Buddha and Mahavira were born in a republican setting) where the norm of equality was high. The ruler was a first person among equals (*primus inter pares*). The Buddhist Jataka tales (composed in Sanskrit) give much evidence about the early states. But when the Empires rose in North India these small states were superseded. In fact, Kautilya's Arthashastra recommends an aggressive strategy to take over the small states, so that the Mauryan Empire would not face political competition. In the south, however, the Chola, Pallava and Pandya rulers pursued a decentralized polity¹⁵; the village panchayats (like the early republics of north) maintained genuine autonomy. The kings were mainly engaged in defending the territory against invaders and maintaining administrative cohesion within the state.

The central aspect of the Vedic society was the maintenance of an interdependence between cosmos and the earth. Hence, the rulers led by Brahmin priests regularly conducted the fire sacrifices. It was clearly a two way process. The gods protected society through the provision of good rains, surplus crops and ensured health to people and livestock. At the same time by receiving the offerings of the people during fire sacrifice the gods retained their heavenly positions. Therefore, a dutiful ruler by performing sacrifice contributed to the good of both cosmos and earth. If men depended on gods, the latter also required support from the former. In the legends Indra is upset when Vishwamitra undertakes Tapasya. Likewise, Indra is upset when the people of Vraja stop worshipping him following the advice from the child god Krishna. These acts disrupted the old order based on reciprocal ties. As mentioned above, the Indian approach to religion is not based on fear. In the West Asian religions god is transcendental and hence he does not depend on the acts of people. Instead, the people are at the mercy of the mighty god. This is the underlying reason for the extraordinary importance attached to the kingship in India¹⁶. Any ordinary mortal can become a king, but once he assumes kingship his good rule ensures peace on both cosmos and earth.

As mentioned in the introduction, the sects and cults which have arisen in India from time to time have responded to the ethnic diversities of Indian people, by throwing up alternative paths to the attainment of the final goal described as Moksha or Nirvana. As Vivekananda and Aurobindo noted in their works, Vedic wisdom (especially the Upanishadic truth) has guided all subsequent sacred documents such as epics, puranas, etc. These later products are not outside the Vedic framework. A few words would be necessary to clarify the relationship between Vedas and Upanishads (Vedanta). The Upanishads like Buddhism and Jainism de-emphasized animal slaughter and materialistic goals of Vedic culture. Instead, they urged people to pursue the spiritual path by giving new meanings to the action. For eg: sacrifice means the giving up of ego (called *ahamkara* or *asmita*). Likewise, Vedic rites have strong symbolic meanings. For eg: The desire for sons has an esoteric meaning, the sons are a metaphor for ideas. The fire sacrifice refers to the inner life of man; it enables him to remove the ego and acquire new ideas (i.e., intuition) to guide him forward on the spiritual path. Thus, the sacred texts in India, whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, retain the same basic tenets, although numerous alternative explanations are put forth by them. In sum, all important religious developments in Hinduism up to the present can only be placed under the rubric Sanatana Dharma¹⁷. From the time of Vedic rishis till the present, basic ethical and spiritual ideas have continued. To that extent, Buddha, Mahavira, Kabir, Nanak, Shankara, Ramanuja and Swami Narayana did not reject the Sanatana tradition; they only modified some parts of it and made it more dynamic.

As mentioned earlier, the communal phase started during British rule, especially the later part. The early rulers of the British East India Company did not interfere in religious affairs. But the later rulers followed a divisive policy. For instance, under the aegis of the "superiority of Aryan races" they brought

about rifts between different sections of people through systematic disinformation. The Hindus and Sikhs were encouraged to believe that they belonged to separate ‘races’. The Hindus and Muslims came to distrust each other to the extent that it would not be possible for them to live side by side. The Aryan and Dravidian languages were declared as coming from separate origins. The martial ‘races’ were quite distinct from non-martial ‘races’. To facilitate such unsubstantiated views, books were written and articles published in journals of Indology.

Reflection and Action 23.2

Do you think your religion has played a positive role in your life? Give your perspective in an essay of one page on “The Social Significant of My Religion”.

Compare your essay with those of other’s at your Study Center.

Besides, the administrative measures taken up during the British rule created a sense of separation. The colonial era was marked by the existence of about 600 princely states which had entered into treaty with the foreign rule. Under the treaty the same cultural or linguistic area was parcelled into small states, which had their own army, currency and railway networks. (It was during 1947-1950 that under the leadership of Sardar Patel these states were merged into the Indian Union). In the first part of 20th Century, the Partition of Bengal in 1911 and the Partition of the country in 1947-1948 were large scale events. These were the culminations of increasing communal tension in the Indian subcontinent. The various Census operations which lasted till 1931 had heightened the caste consciousness of the people. In the nineteen thirties and forties, the rise of Dravidian movement in south and the anti-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra added a new divisive dimension to national consciousness.

23.5 Social Ramifications of Divisiveness in Indian Religions

It is foreign to the culture of India that anybody should be persecuted for their beliefs. Vivekananda noted that both Buddha and Jesus were the prophets who sought to give a new direction to the seekers of salvation. But the response they received from the people around them was quite different. Buddha preached against the Brahminical rituals in his journeys across the vast plains of North India. He was not halted anywhere by the Brahmins¹⁸. He lived upto a ripe old age; till his death he continued his mission. By contrast, Jesus was persecuted by the orthodox Jews because he criticized their materialism (he said “drive out the money changers from the temples”) and also their obsession with nationalism. His universal message of love and indifference to power and privilege incensed the Jews. Vivekananda further stated that materialists (Lokayata and charvaka) freely propagated their atheism without hindrance. The statement that Brahmins destroyed their atheistic texts and buried them in sand is a canard. The fact is that both Buddhism and Jainism are atheistic, although they believe in spirituality. Their texts were not destroyed by the Brahmins. The real reason for the decline and disappearance of materialists, such as, the Cgarvaha’s was that they had no ethical goals. They preached a hedonism based on sensual pleasures. The decline of Tantra in India was also due to the inversion of ethics. In fact, all those religions in India which have survived today are committed to an ethical code. In India atheism is not non-belief in god but denial of divinity (spirituality) within man.¹⁹ Buddha and Mahavira did not subscribe to belief in god, but they upheld an ethical conduct which they said was necessary for the spiritual advancement of mankind.

A distinguishing aspect of India according to Coomaraswamy is that there is freedom of worship regarding the personal deity (Ishta Devata)²⁰. Any deity or spiritual guide can be chosen by a man or woman without causing disruption of social ties. A Hindu can freely adopt Nanak as his guru; a Sikh can go on an annual pilgrimage to Vaishnadevi or Dwaraka. Such freedom is not available in West Asian religions. This is because only a select few (Moses, Christ or Mohammed) are recognised as spiritual guides. In India just as sects are many, gurus are also many; these gurus cut across the caste, gender or social status. All paths are equally valid and it is up to the individual to choose anyone. The only constraint is on the strict observance of norms which are prescribed to the castes and sects. An interesting legend from Gujarat refers to Swami Narayan's yogic power; he appeared at once as Shiva, Narayana and Durga on the mental screens of his devotees. He transported two hundred devotees to Brindavan in a trance state to witness the Ras lila of Krishna. These devotees included some non-Hindus like Jains and Muslims.²¹

As mentioned earlier, in spite of the remarkable freedom on the level of beliefs, the sects have often undermined each other. The sectarian literature often has a partisan viewpoint. The gurus of one sect may be glorified as superior to their counterparts in other sects. During the past centuries, some violent acts have indeed disturbed the tolerant spirit. A Maratha general in the end of 18th Century laid siege to the monastery in southwestern Karnataka which had been established by Shankaracharya in Sringeri. When the pontiff appealed to Tipu Sultan of Mysore he sent a contingent of Muslim soldiers to guard the monastery. This force threw out the invaders. Later, the Peshwa (ruler of Marathas) apologised to the pontiff for the misconduct of his general.

There is a widespread view that many temples were destroyed by the Muslim invaders in North and Western India. Indeed, Somnath temple was looted by Mohammed of Gazni; Malik Kafur, a Muslim general, destroyed some Hindu temples in South India. But it is not possible to conclude that all temples or other places of worship were destroyed by the Muslims. In fact, there is evidence to show that the sectarian rivalries have taken advantage of turmoil created by war or invasion. For example, in the 17th century the Vijayanagar kingdom of the South was destroyed by the Muslim rulers of the neighbouring provinces. However, in the aftermath it was found that some of the Vaishnavite temples had been extensively damaged, although the Shaivite temples were mostly left intact. As the Muslim conquerors would not take side with one sect or the other, it was quite likely that one sect settled old scores with another sect, taking advantage of the disturbed conditions.

If the Muslims converted a few Hindu or Jain shrines into Islamic monuments (for ex. Kutab Minar in Delhi or Jama Masjid in Ahmedabad), the Hindus also converted Buddhist or Jain shrines into Hindu ones (for ex. Puri Jagannath temple in Orissa or Lakshmi temple at Kolhapur, Maharashtra were previously non-Hindu monuments). But change from one faith to another has not obliterated the old features. The converted structures retain the old features: this can be seen in Kutab Minar in Delhi or Jama Masjid in Ahmedabad. When a Hindu or Jain shrine was converted into an Islamic monument, the snake image was turned into a lotus flower. Islam forbids human or animal images but allows geometrical or floral designs. However, Coomaraswamy noted that the human or animal images found in Indian shrines are not drawn from real life but are only symbolic: they stand for ideas. Hence he found no difference between Hindu and Muslim iconography.²²

23.6 Multiple interpretations in Indian Religions

The basic sacred texts of Hindus which are composed in Sanskrit are the four Vedas, commentaries by the acharyas on the Vedic rituals and formulae, one hundred and eight Upanishads, Ramayana and Mahabharata, the twenty one

Purnas, and the hagiographies of Bhakti saints who lived and preached in different parts of India. Bhagavad Gita (which is actually a Upanishad) has referred to the three paths to salvation: the Jnana marga (path of spiritual knowledge) karma marga (the path of action) and the Bhakti marga (the path of devotion).²³ Over the centuries, hundreds of commentaries have been written on the Gita; the output is continuing upto the present. The commentaries have appeared in Indian languages and also English and German. Each commentary professes to offer a new interpretation of Krishna's message to Arjuna. Whatever be the Hindu sect the guru attains a high status if he or she writes or preaches on Gita. Similarly, other texts have undergone diverse interpretations. There is no doubt that the endless diversity of Indian people in language, region and inherited culture has had a bearing on these varied interpretations and religious practices. The endless debates between different sects also emanate from the same source; multiple interpretations and practices have stimulated high literary activity but have also often caused frictions.

Box 23.5: Sects Amongst Buddhism, Jainism and Other Religions

The Buddhist sects such as Hinayana and Mahayana also gave rise to a large volume of literature which interpreted Buddha's message in different ways. The Hinayana is a monk-centred religion; the members of laity cannot attain nirvana in this life but have to wait for a better birth. The monks are free from the delusions of earthly life; they are assured of liberation in this very birth. By contrast, Mahayana opens the gate to a wide range of people (even householders). Also, Mahayana subscribes to the doctrine of interdependent origination of all phenomena (pratitya samutpada).²⁴ What it means is that human beings can realize nirvana only when they shed their individualized identity (ego) and merge themselves in the interdependence with others. Hence, for them nirvana is not a state of void (shunyata) but the end of hiatus between individual and collectivity. There are also a variety of smaller sects which interpret Buddha hood in different ways.

The Jains have two major divisions: Digambara and Shwetambara. In the former category the senior monks are stark naked; they are the realised souls who have shed all worldly snares. They admit only males to monkhood, although women can earn merit through deeds like prolonged fasting etc., The Shwetambara sect consists of both male and female ascetics who are clad in white and follow a strenuous routine. Jain monks of any sect are very puritanical and follow the path of non-violence. Nevertheless, there are long standing rivalries between them over the validity of some sacred texts. In some parts of India, there have been clashes between the followers of the two sects. There are several disputes both in and outside the law courts over the control of temples. The Muslim and Sikh groups also have dissidence; within the Islam the Sunnis and the Shias have come into violent clashes in parts of North India. The Sikhism has a dissident section called 'Nirankaris', which has gained widespread support among the populace in North India.

An outstanding problem in Indian religions is what is called "reification". It means that ideas, meanings or symbols are turned into things. For eg: from the time of Manu the Hindu males were enjoined upon to offer Shraddha (libation) periodically to deceased ancestors. This practice later became a mere ritual, without any symbolic significance; the priests elaborated the ceremony which became an economic burden. Similarly, events such as birth, marriage, funerals, etc, were ritualized and elaborated; performing these rites drove more and more people into debt or economic deprivation. In most cases, the symbolic significance has been lost in the observance of Hindus. For ex: during Ekadashi (fasting on the 11th day of the month) the pious Hindus abstain from food and water. The central meaning of Ekadashi is not gaining merit through fasting alone. The term refers to the inner control exercised by man over the following: his five senses, his five motor functions (speaking, working, moving, eating and drinking) plus his own mind. Through this control the individual comes to dwell near god (upa-vasa). But most common people interpret the term upavasa as merely fasting. Abstaining from food without

the self-control or mental focus has detracted the people from the basic purpose.

Similarly, the other communities have also become a prey to reification. In Islam “Jihad” means the self-control which an individual gains under the guidance from Allah. Under the nationalistic urges, at present the term has come to mean a disposition towards violent activity against unarmed people or taking over territory. Islam does not sanction these interpretations. Jihad allows violence only in self-defense, i.e., if there is an attack on the faith by the outsiders, then it calls for armed resistance to it by the faithful. Among Christians the 6th commandment of Moses: “Thou shall not kill” was interpreted to include only human beings. Hence, animals came to be killed for food. There was an institutional practice of vegetarianism in most parts of Europe, perhaps as a compensation for this violation of the Mosaic Code. For forty days during Lent, the Christians stayed away from meat-eating. But it has nearly disappeared at present.

The gurus, munis and the Buddhist monks have not only tried to correct reification but also interpreted the scriptures in a different light. The guru's authority has exceeded the canonical constraints. On a number of occasions, gurus have interpreted sacred texts differently to settle some personal problems of their followers. The guru's satsang is not only a venue for prayers or meditation, but it is also a place for the devotees who throng to it, to gain clarity of mind or find solution to a personal problem. Some gurus in India have remained even silent (mauni) but on a non-verbal level have made the anguished men and women gain repose.²⁵ Ramana Maharshi of south India remained silent most of the time; but the ordinary men and women who came to see him felt relief by just sitting in his presence. Likewise, the followers of Nanak saw a halo around his head, which was a sign of his spirituality. These personalised experiences have phenomenological implications which means that the normal division between subject and object is no longer relevant. The social scientists have to go beyond the confines of positivism to gain insights into the religious life in India. In sum, the guru-shishya relationship transcends the duality of existence. There is an unmediated, direct interaction between the seekers and the guide. The satsang which is well known in North India is a kind of hermeneutical circle in which there are often inexplicable occurrences (for eg. a sudden change in attitude or healing of sickness which can take place instantly). Those who are outside these circles have no experience of this sort. However, this inner reality is compelling even if the outsiders find it difficult to believe.

A few words may be necessary to make the religious scene more explicit. All Indian religions have emphasised that direct experience (for eg. intuition) is more important than learning. In fact, many gurus in India (like Nanak, Ramakrishna) were not learned; yet people flocked to them to seek solace or advice. The guru exercises a moral authority in giving advice to a follower; some of his actions may not find sanction in the sacred texts, but no one questions the guru's words. The acharya who is learned in Sanskrit has a high prestige but he does not exercise personal influence to the same extent as the guru. It is a matter of common observance that attendance at religious gatherings in India is not based on publicity. There is an inner drive which makes the folk participate in religious events.

In the recent years the satsang in North India has come to occupy a central place among the religious populace. The destruction of many temples or other places of worship during the previous centuries had created a void in the north. Hence, the satsang practice started with stalwarts like Tulsidas, Kabir and Nanak but has vibrantly continued down to the present. Both male and female gurus have attracted large audiences consisting of men, women and children. The relative absence of ritualism or temple culture in north India has

not diminished the popularity of religion. The increasing use of electronic media (like T.V. video and audio cassettes) has further strengthened the culture of satsang.

23.7 Conclusion

Religions all over the world have attempted to provide some answers to the mysteries of life, by gaining access to the unknown factors which are operating beneath the visible phenomena. Everywhere religions especially at the folk level celebrate life rather than mourn it. The religious fairs and festivals in India or elsewhere are joyous scenes where families, their kith and kin, networks of villagers gather clad in fresh clothes, and exchange greetings. As noted earlier, these religious fairs for eg. the Pushbar mela her***** are important markets for the trade in the hinterland: cereals, livestock, urban manufactured good etc, are exchanged on a large scale. These fairs are held in temple towns which are now made accessible through modern transport. Lafcadio Hearn (writer on Japanese culture) makes a remark on Japanese temples (Buddhist or Shinto) as follows:

“Religion brings no gloom into this sunshine: before the Buddhas and the gods folk smile as they pray; the temple courts are playgrounds for the children; and within the enclosure of the great public shrines – which are places of festivity rather than solemnity -dancing platforms are erected. For no inconsiderable time one may live in the midst of appearances like these, and perceive nothing to spoil the pleasure of the experience”.²⁶

Hearn's remarks would be applicable to any place of worship. The view of Max Weber that religion in India was driven by “otherworldliness” is not correct, if seen from a totality. It is true that ascetics and monks may stay away from the ordinary pleasures of life and lead thereby a life of deprivation. But for most people it is the celebratory aspect which motivates them to work hard, save money and use the available surplus to participate in a jatra or mela in a temple town. In any case, it is not poverty or despair, which makes individuals men and women to renounce the world. It is the higher perception which holds all human pleasures and pains are illusory that makes a person ascetic. It is a fact that men and women from a well off background have renounced the ties with the world on a voluntary basis. In medieval Europe or India through the ages, this has been the practice. The guru, the satsang, the temple and the pilgrimage are the abiding “anti-structures” that seem to absorb the fissiparous trends in the Indian society. It is these agencies which underline the oneness of Indian society in the midst of diversities. The sociologists can constructively interpret the divisions in order to gain an understanding of its cohesiveness.

In the West there has been in recent decades much debate on the separation between state and church. Although the constitutions of Western countries have separated the two, on less formal levels the separation is not complete. As mentioned earlier, the Nordic Europe is broadly Protestant, while the Southern Europe is broadly catholic. The main reason for the bitterness regarding this is that the European kings used to take a partisan view to in enforcing the public policies. The ruler happened to be a Catholic or Protestant or Orthodox Christian. During his rule the other religious groups in his realm had a feeling that they were discriminated against. The Indian experience was quite different. What guided them was their commitment to the dhamma which was non-sectarian. Emperors like Ashoka propagated dhamma which included the welfare of different religious sects. The term stands for justice in broad terms and goes far beyond ritualism, sectarianism or bigotry. Even at present, if there is a proper understanding of this term, there is no need for opposition between religion and state. Both can be complementary to each other and together they have the potentiality of ushering in a new India.

23.8 Further Reading

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Unit 24

Secularisation

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- 24.1 Introduction
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Learning Objectives

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- define the concept of secularism;
- explain what is meant by the process of secularisation;
- discuss the concept of secularism in the Indian context;
- describe the reasons why secularism became an important feature of the Indian National Movement and finally;
- discuss the important and significant nature of this concept in the Indian Constitution.

24.1 Introduction

Secularism, it is said, stands for a tendency that is broad and basic, primordial and significant, in the evolution of human thought and experience. Secularism is not a mere protest or discontent with excesses of religious zeal. Secularism is defined in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as a branch of utilitarian ethics, designed for the physical, social and moral improvement of mankind, which neither affirms nor denies the theistic premises of religion. It would be generally correct to say that in the contemporary modern world any man/woman considers his or her religion as a private and personal affair, governing his/her relationship with some unseen power God, or whatever one may call it. This relationship should help and not hinder the efficient performance of duties of the individual in other spheres of life. The process of secularisation of life and thought consists in the withdrawal and separation of 'religion' from other spheres of 'life and thought'.

Its essential principle has been to seek for human improvement by material means alone. The main thrust of secularism is towards the secular, social issues and reforms, which demanded the concerted efforts of all persons, regardless of their theological affiliations. The important thing was that those secular issues were to be tackled without any recourse to religious dogmas. Thus, secularism was largely a movement which aimed to improve the lot of people here on earth and emancipate them from all tyranny, whether of the church, or of a capitalist socio-economic order.¹

Etymologically, the word secular originates from the Latin *seculum* which implied "great span of time" or the "spirit of the age". Subsequently, it acquired different meaning - that of belonging to 'This World'. Thus, two worlds are conceptualized i.e. the secular and the religious or the temporal and the spiritual. In the Christian discourse, the spiritual order is regarded as decisive in terms of ultimate truth. The term secularisation was the subsequent

outcome. It was coined in 1648 after the Peace of Westphalia which originally referred to the transfer of ecclesiastical lands to civic control.²

Secularism is a “process whereby religious thinking practice and institutions loose their social significance”.³ To speak of secularism is to speak of the triumph of science over religion and reason over faith. Secularism is a celebration of man's reason, ability to emancipate him/her from the influences of religious customs, beliefs, practices. Therefore, Secularism means the inevitable “desacrilisation” of the World. The World loses its sacred character as man and nature become the object of rational-casual explanation in which the supernatural plays no part.

24.2 Secularism and Secularisation : A Definition

‘Secularism’ is a value-loaded concept, its values derive from, and must be contextualised in our understanding of the underlying social process we call ‘secularisation’. ‘Secularisation is a social process and ‘secularism’ is a socio-political ideal or ideology. In actuality ‘secularism’ can become a reality in our social institutions only in so far as these are affected by ‘secularisation’. Therefore, secularism is a product of, and, in turn, strengthen the process of secularisation. For the truism that there can be no secularism without process of secularisation is now widely accepted, but the challenge of actualising it through concrete social, political, economic and educational measures is an enormous task .⁴

Secularism is, above all, a product of the *weltanshauung* of the Renaissance and Enlightenment. It was the expression of Western man's urge to live his own life independently of the domination by the church which was the prevalent feature of medieval Western society. Secularism also affirmed the reality and worth of life in this world and the authority of reason and science in all secular matters.⁵

The word “secularism” was coined by Gorge Jacob Holyoake in 1851 to describe the socio-political movement started by himself, Charles Bradlaugh and others. G.J Holyoake used the term secularism to define an ideology, wherein social and industrial morality hitherto determined by reference to the transcending principles of religion, were now to be determined by reason, and firmly anchored to the good of man in this life. Secularism was subsequently projected as a rationalist movement, agnostic or indifferent to Religion.⁶

The secularism of Holyoake was a simple philosophy, which affirmed concern for life in this world, as articulated by the humanists and positivists alike. Secularism affirms the worth of this worldly existence, the independence of scientific knowledge, and human happiness as the only legitimate aims of social institutions. Holyoake described secularism as a “way of thinking”, and as being concerned with “issues that can be tested in this life”.⁷

According to Eris S, Water house, the relation of secularism to religion was understood as “mutually exclusive, rather than hostile.” Secularism's only concern is that this world be known by experience and reason. It is not concerned about the “other world”, or life after death; and neither offers, nor forbids, any opinion about these matters, it is willing to leave such questions to theology and is equally indifferent to both theism and atheism. Before adopting the term “secularism”, Holyoake had considered the term “netheism” and “limitationism” as alternatives. Holyoake was apparently more interested in countering the irrationalism of Christian theology, than in the negation of religion *per se*. His second aim was the affirmation of the worth and dignity of person and the autonomy of secular life .⁸

To begin then with secularisation in the West was hailed as “the liberation of modern man from religious tutelage” by some, while others bewailed it “as Christiamisation, paganisation and the like...”⁹ But historically the process of secularisation for the social scientist is intimately linked with the rise of modernity in the West and some would consider it as “perhaps the most significant development of the last several hundred years” ¹⁰. It was the apparent decline in traditional church-oriented religion in recent times that heightened the process of secularisation and brought it to its present culmination. Yet it is a process whose roots can be traced to the very founding of the major religions and in fact it stands in an ambiguous and dialectical relation to the very phenomena it supposedly undermines. In this perspective, secularism is a Western concept to the extent that secularisation is a process that is located in Western society.

The term ‘secularisation’ is defined by Bryan Wilson as the process in which different social institutions ‘become recognised as distinctive concerns operating with considerable autonomy. ¹¹ It is also a process of “decline in religious activities, beliefs, ways of thinking and institutions.”¹² This decline in religious consciousness is the result of the universal acceptance of pragmatic or scientific approach to secular issues. In a secularised society people turn to science for explanation of natural phenomena and for remedial measures for their mundane problems. They no more take recourse to the “supernatural” for either cognitive understanding of the world, or even for emotional support.¹³ As a result, “Religion in the West has generally become a department of the social order rather than the pervasive or even determinant influence it once was.”¹⁴

In another work, Wilson mentions three features of a secular or secularised society, i.e.

- a)The prevalence of instrumental values,
- b)Rational procedures,
- © Technological methods.

He also defines a secular society as one in which “the sense of the sacred, the sense of the sanctity of life and deep religiosity are most conspicuously absent.”¹⁵ Let us see how the concept of secularism is understood in the context of Indian Society.

24.3 Secularism in India

Right from the beginning, Indian secularism drew its strength from pluralism. Secularism in the Indian tradition, was not the opposition of religion but was related to communalism, while Europe, being mono-religious, secularism was not the opposite of communalism as there was no struggle for domination between various religious communities. This is the crucial difference between the Western and Indian concepts of secularism. In Europe there was a struggle between the Christians and the church, while in India the struggle was between one religious community and the other. In India the saner leaders of both the communities emphasised justice in power sharing without questioning the religious authority of either community at any stage. ⁶²

Indians came across the concept of secularism in nineteenth century under the influence of the British rulers. It had never been the part of Indian scene before. Unlike Europe, India did not undergo any renaissance movement. It was only in late nineteenth century when the mutiny failed and the British consolidated their rule that the Indians opened their minds to the Western influences. But the Western ideas became popular only among a small section of Indians in urban areas. The British rule was essentially secular, as they began to impose secular laws replacing many of the religious laws. They also

imposed common criminal code, though they did not touch personal laws. It was a new experience for the Indians. They had always followed religious laws and traditions so far. There did not exist any concept of secular law until then. Any deviation from these laws and traditions was strongly condemned. It even attracted punishment like social boycott and excommunication. In the case of Hindus, caste rules were followed very rigidly indeed.

The word 'secular' in political sense was used after formation of Indian National Congress in 1885. The word secular in Indian political terminology came to be used in a pluralist setting and not in a Western sense that it indicated indifference to religion. As we know in the West the concept of secularism emerged as a result of a struggle between the Church and the political rulers. The Church was dominating the political scene and denied independence to the ruling monarchies in various parts of Europe. Thus, as a result of this struggle, the concept of secular polity emerged in Europe. It should also be noted that the European society was, for all practical purposes, a mono-religious society. Thus secularism had a very different connotation in the Western context. It is essentially signified a political authority totally independent of Church. The concept of secularism in India emerged in the context of religious pluralism, as against religious authoritarianism in the West. Secularism was emphasised by the Indian National Congress to allay the apprehension of religious minorities, particularly the Muslims, that it was not a Hindu political formation. It was a religious community, rather than religious authority, which mattered in Indian context.⁶³

Reflection and Action 24.1

Interview five people in your community belonging to different caste, class, occupation and religion. Ask them about their views on whether India is a 'secular' society or not?

Write a report of about two pages on the outcome of this interview, comparing the opinion of the interviewees and your own opinion. Compare your report with those of other students at your Study Center.

Secularism, in the Indian context, had very different connotation right from the very beginning. It related more to community and its secular interests rather than religion and its authority. Throughout our independence struggle, we were faced with secular/communal dichotomy. But none of our political leaders thought of challenging any religious authority, Hindu or Muslim. On the contrary, these leaders held out repeated assurances that both Hindus and Muslims would be free to profess and practice their respective religions both in an individual and a collective sense. Not only this, the political leadership used existing religious institutions to draw Hindu and Muslim masses in to political processes. Thus, Tilak used Shivaji and Ganesh festivals to create political consciousness among the Hindu masses. Gandhiji, too, used the concept of "Ram Rajya" on the one hand, to draw Hindu masses, and the Khilafat movement on the other, to attract the Muslim masses. Religion and religious institutions had to be used repeatedly to inspire people towards political action. Thus, Indian secularism never collided either with religion or religious authority. On the contrary, it drew upon it and its institutions to reinforce political processes.

As the base of the freedom movement widened in the 1920s with the advent of Mahatma Gandhi and as he proceeded to fine tune the techniques of mass resistance that he had developed in South Africa, previously marginal groups were brought in to the freedom struggle and Indian society became united under the influence of the overarching call for freedom. But, paradoxically, the same period was to see the advent of fundamentalist and rabid groups, both Hindu and Muslim, who began to politicise religion and thereby divide Indian

society. And, as we have seen all over the world today, religious identification is often the product of a political movement and not necessarily the precondition for such a movement. In sum, we were to see parallel movements in India, one, that united people on the lines of the anti-colonial struggle and the other that divided people in the name of religion.

24.4 Secularism and the Indian National Movement

The leadership of the freedom struggle, therefore, had to devise a principle that would be capable of holding together people who subscribed to different faiths. This holding mechanism was provided by secularism. Nationalist movement, on the other hand, fought the colonial government for the goal of a united, free India. It sought to enlist the support of all religious groups in its nationalist struggle.⁶⁴ This was, note, not a secularism that commands the separation of religion and politics but a secularism that ensures the equality of all faiths- *sarva dharma sambhava*. ⁶⁵

Communalism had a devastating effect on India's national life, finally resulting in the partition of the country and wide scale communal riots. It, therefore, came to be regarded as the greatest challenge to, or even negation of, both nationalism and secularism. The nationalist leaders very soon realised that they had to fight two enemies simultaneously – one, the British imperialist power and second, communalism within India. They saw in secularism an ideology that could serve both their purposes, that is fight or controvert communalism and provide a basis for a united Indian nation, which, in turn, would strengthen the nationalist movement for India's independence.

A nation can survive only when all sections of the populace share a sense of common nationality and to that extent transcend their limited, regional, ethnic, linguistic, or religious identities. In the words of Nehru, "Possibly, the most essential characteristics of national consciousness is a sense of belonging together and together facing the rest of mankind."⁶⁶ Since communal loyalties are the greatest hurdle in the emergence of a national consciousness, the latter can be founded only on a secularist ideology.

Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw an overwhelming rise in Indian nationalism. The Congress led nationalist movement included persons with varying shades of opinion. It was, therefore, not entirely free from communalist elements, but its main thrust was towards a nationalist, secularist, and democratic ideology.

Unlike the social reformers and revivalist ideologues of that period, the leaders of Indian National Congress were secular in their approach to national problems. For the founders of Congress, national identity and the interests of the nation as a whole were all-inclusive and transcended the differences of religion, caste, language etc. the report of the second session of the Congress (1886) made its secular and nationalist character clear:

"The Congress is a community of temporal interests, and not of spiritual convictions, that qualify men to represent each other in the discussion of political questions. We hold their general interests in this country being identical, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and Parsis may as members of their respective communities represent each other in the discussion of public secular affairs". ⁶⁷

During the first decades of its existence, Congress was dominated by leaders like Dadabhai Nauroji, Surendernath Banerjee and GopalKrishna Gokhle. They were known as moderates who believed in rationalism, secularism, constitutionalism and liberalism. They were gradually replaced by more extremist leaders like Bipinchandra Pal, B.G. Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai. These leaders were strong nationalists, but there was a religious tinge to their speeches and

actions, such as the idealisation of Shivaji and Rana Pratap and popularisation of the religious festivals associated with Durga and Ganesh. Bipan Chandra has argued that both the shift in the Muslim leaders' stand from a nationalist one to a communalist one, and the religious tinge in the speeches and actions of the "extremist" leaders (as compared to the rational, liberal stand of the "moderates") were due to the compulsions of the mass politics. All of them knew that religious idioms, symbols and the talk of religion being in danger would have much greater appeal for the masses than any secular ideology.⁶⁸

In spite of this religious tinge, the nationalism of Congress leaders was very different from that of Hindu chauvinists and other communalists. Their concept of the nation was territorial, that is, included all the inhabitants of India, irrespective of their religious creed, or any other differences. They emphasised equality – of status for all the inhabitants of India, whatever their religion. Gandhi repeatedly affirmed "India cannot cease to be one nation because people belonging to different religions live in it. If the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dreamland. The Hindus, the Mohammedans, the Parsis and Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen. In no part of the world are one nationality and religion synonymous terms, nor has it ever been so in India."⁶⁹

Another basic difference between Indian nationalism and the so-called "Hindu and Muslim nationalisms" lies in their respective attitudes towards religion. While the latter made religion the basis of both the individual's and community's identity and all their secular interests, Indian nationalism firmly asserted the irrelevance of religion for India's nationhood. Though all the nationalist leaders, with the exception of two Nehrus, were men of religion who accepted it as a worthy dimension of human life, they, at the same time, affirmed the need to separate religion from secular national concerns. They believed the national integration, or the sense of national identity could be achieved only if Indians set aside their religious identities and joined hand in the freedom struggle. Mahatma's efforts to integrate the "lower" caste Hindus in to the larger Hindu society, as well as his efforts to bring the Muslim and other religious minorities in to the national mainstream, were expressions of nationalist leaders to a large extent. This approach implied a total rejection of communalism, but frankly accepted the desirability and importance of religion in a person's life.

Further, religion was not the *bete noire* of Indian ideologues and nationalist leaders as it was in the post-Reformation West. In India, religion never tried to question scientific discoveries, or the use of scientific technology in everyday life. More importantly, religion was never perceived by Indian nationalist leaders and scholars of the crucial decades before Independence as the cause or source of the miserable condition of Indian masses. Instead, the colonial rule was perceived as the chief or only source of the misery and backwardness of the people. The solution to India's problems was again visualised as the attainment of Independence (*swaraja*), rather than the negation of religion.

The emphasis in most nationalist leaders, from Gandhi to Patel and Azad, was on the acceptance of the fact of existence of separate religious communities, while at the same time seeking to neutralise this fact by a greater emphasis on the need and value of their peaceful existence in one nation-society.⁷⁰ On the other hand, religious identity was not important for Nehru who emphasised a secular national identity rather than peaceful coexistence of different religious communities. Thus, Indian nationalism was based on the perception that a nation is constituted by a people who share common everyday problems, and endeavour together to achieve common goals of freedom, democratic rights and a just social order.⁷¹

Indian nationalism was further intimately allied to a secular standpoint. From the beginning, communalism, or the alliance between religion and politics,

was seen as the greatest danger to both nationalist movement and national integration. The entire concept of Indian secularism was developed in the process of attempting to weld together a rather heterogeneous populace, divided on communal lines, into a modern nation. This required a total rejection of communalism and the affirmation of the need to separate politics and other secular institutions from religion. “The alliance of religion and politics in the shape of communalism”, said Nehru, is the most dangerous and yields the most abnormal kind of illegitimate brood.”⁷²

Secularism was understood as the negation of communalism and implied the separation of religion and politics. D.E. Smith observes: “The main current of Indian nationalism assured the separation of religion and politics; there was no conflict between India’s religious pluralism and the goal of independence with political unity.”⁷³

The need for secularism arose in India and secularism was conceived accordingly in two related contexts – first, to counter the challenge of communalism to national integrity and second, to provide a basis for nationalism or nationalist movement which should be shared by all Indians.

Satish Chandra has pointed out that the two major concerns of leaders of national movement were “the nature of India’s nationhood and the basis on which its unity could be preserved.”⁷⁴. “The concept of secularism”, according to him “arose in this context. It sought to mediate between the interests of various communities, and postulated a united Indian state where the followers of any religion would neither be favoured nor discriminated against. Thus, unlike Europe, secularism in India arose not as a process of conflict with organised religion, but an attempt to unify the followers of different religious faiths in India in their struggle against the foreign rulers by making secularism the premise of a united free India.

The emphasis, therefore, was not an opposition to religion at all, but on its accommodation in secular life by all religious groups. The idea of religious national life by all religious groups. The idea of religious toleration in terms of *sarva dharma sambhava*, or equal regard for all religions, became pivotal to Indian conception of secularism, as it made possible the harmonious existence of several religious communities in one nation-state. It was expected that communalism or exclusive loyalty to one’s religious community could be countered by a positive ideal of equal regard for all religions.

Reflection and Action 24.2

Go to a library near your home or the Study Center library and look for history text books on the Indian National Movement and India’s freedom struggle.

Write an essay of about two pages on “India’s Struggle for Freedom and the use of Religious symbols.”

Compare your essay with those of other students at your Study Center.

The Indian leadership continued to hold fast to this normative principle despite the fact that the country was partitioned ostensibly in the name of religion. Given the deep polarisation of Indian society and given the massive massacres and the brutality that marked the partition of the country, the leadership could easily have swung in the direction of majoritarianism. But it refused to be swayed and remained true to its commitment that all religions in post-independent India would be treated equally by the state.

Secularism, therefore, was the norm that inspired the forging of a mass coalition that fought for the independence of the country; it informed the debates in the constituent Assembly and underlay the spirit of the Constitution. And it was this meaning of secularism that was given a concrete shape in the Constitution.

Consider that the first principle of secularism that was codified in the Constitution carried the assurance that everyone had the freedom to practice their religion via Article 25 of the fundamental rights chapter. It follows that religion itself was not sought to be discouraged. ‘We call our State a secular one. The word “secular” perhaps is not a very happy one. And yet, for want of a better, we have used it. What exactly does it mean? It does not obviously mean a state where religion as such is discouraged. It means freedom of religion and conscience, including freedom for those who may have no religion,’¹⁴stated Nehru.

Now, strictly speaking, we do not need to proclaim secularism in order to have religious freedom. This freedom can emerge from, and form part of the fundamental rights that are assured to every citizen. But a secular state cannot stop at granting the right to religion. The principle of secularism goes further and establishes equality between all religious groups. The concept of equality or sameness of all religions was inspired by the doctrine of *sarva dharma sambhava* that had permeated Gandhiji’s understanding of religious toleration.

Box 24.1: Dr. Radhakrishnan’s Views on Secularism

Dr. Radhakrishnan was to phrase his understanding of secularism as:

“We hold that no one religion should be given preferential status, or unique distinction, that no one religion should be accorded special privileges in national life, or international relations for that would be a violation of the basic principles of democracy and contrary to the best interest of religion and government....No group of citizens shall arrogate to itself rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person shall suffer any form of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike should be free to share to the fullest degree in the common life.”⁷⁶

Now just as religious freedom does not necessarily need secularism to support it, the equality of religions can be established via the fundamental right of equality vide Article 14. but if we were to stop at this, secularism would be rendered redundant. For secularism extends beyond equality and freedom to declare that the state is not aligned to any particular religion. **It is this particular commitment that establishes the credentials of a secular state. Or secularism.** We can say, outstripping provisions for freedom and equality stipulates that the state will maintain an attitude of principled distance from all religious groups. It also contracts that the state would neither align itself with any particular religion, especially the majority religion, nor pursue any religious tasks of its own.

Jawaharlal Nehru was to state as much on one occasion. ‘It is perhaps not very easy even to find a good word in Hindi for “secular”. Some people think that it means something opposed to religion. That obviously is not correct. What it means is that it is a state which honours all faiths equally and gives them equal opportunities; that, as a state, it does not allow itself to be attached to one faith or religion, which then becomes the state religion.’ ⁷⁷ The second and the third component of secularism, that is, equality of all religions and the distancing of the state from all religious groups, was specifically meant to assure the minorities that they had a legitimate place in the country and that they would not be discriminated against. Correspondingly, secularism established that the majority would not be privileged in any manner. The creed, therefore, discouraged any pretension that the religion of the majority had any right to stamp the body politic with its ethos.

24.5 The Constitution and Secularism

Indian Constitution is a creative blend between state secularism and religiosity of the civil society. The Indian Constitution treats all citizens equal, irrespective

of caste, creed, race, sex or religion. Article 14 guarantees equality before law. It says, "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India." Article 15 says, 1) "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. 2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing, roads and places of public resort maintained, wholly or partly out of state funds or dedicated to the use of the general public."⁷⁸

Thus, the article does away with caste discriminations and Article 16 guaranteed equality of opportunity in matters of employment. Article 25-to 30-guarantee freedom of religion, of culture and language. Article 30 also guarantees to minorities the right to establish their own educational institutions. These Articles from 25 to 30 are extremely significant as far as minority rights are concerned, the minorities could be religious or linguistic.

Though our constitution is secular, originally the word secularism did not occur in it. It was during emergency in mid-seventies that the words "secular and socialist" were added and India was described as "secular and socialist republic". But the words secularism or secular were not defined. According to H.M.Seervai's *Constitutional Law of India*, "Realizing that the words 'secular' and 'socialist' required to be defined, the 45th amendment bill (which became the 44th amendment) proposed an amendment of article 366 by inserting definitions of the words 'secular' and 'socialist'. However, this amendment was not accepted by the Council of States. Consequently the words 'secular' and 'socialist' have remained undefined. But a footnote to this gives the proposed amendment defines secularism thus:

Article 366 of the Constitution shall be renumbered as clause (2) of that article and before clause (2) as so numbered, the following clause shall be inserted, namely, (1) in the preamble to the Constitution the expression 'secular' means a republic in which there is equal respect for all religions.⁷⁹

Thus, we see the words secular and secularism remain undefined in the Indian Constitution. 'Secularism' in the Indian Constitution connotes that:

- 1) the state, by itself, shall not espouse or establish or practice any religion,
- 2) public revenues will not be used to promote any religion,
- 3) the state shall have the power to regulate any "economic, financial or other secular activity" associated with religious practice (Article 25(2) (a) of the constitution);
- 4) the state shall have the power through the law to provide for "social welfare and reform or the throwing open of Hindu religious institutions of public character too all classes and sections of Hindus" (Article 25 (2) (b) of the constitution);
- 5) the practice of untouchability (in-so-far as it may be justified by Hindu religion) is constitutionally outlawed by Article 17);
- 6) every individual person will have, in that order, an equal right to freedom of conscience and religion;
- 7) these rights are, however, subject to the power of the state through law to impose restrictions on the ground of "public order, morality and health";
- 8) these rights are furthermore subject to other fundamental rights in Part III; and
- 9) the courts, auspiciously the Supreme Court, shall have the 'say' on adjudging state action as valid or otherwise under the above principles.

By this time, the nine features of secularism had marshaled behind them a quarter century of national constitutional consensus. To these nine features has been now added, since 1976, a fundamental duty of all citizens (under Articles 51-A (f) to “preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture”. This duty is addressed to all citizens (including leaders of political parties, and all holders of state power) and it is declared their fundamental obligation. Neither political practices, nor practices of power (including judicial power) will be legitimate if they contradict this duty.

The Constitution has undoubtedly erected a ‘wall of separation’ between the State and religion. While there are no doors opening from the side of religion in to the State, there are, however, several doors opening from side of the State in to religion. If the interests of public order, morality and health so demand, the right to profess, practice and propagate religion may be breached; so also the right of a religious denomination to manage its own affairs in matters pertaining to religion. The right to profess, practice and propagate religion may also be breached if the enforcement of other fundamental rights require it or if the demands of the social welfare and reform require it.

Thus the constitution contemplates and compels the supremacy of secular authority and secular interest over religious authority and religious interest.

We see, therefore, that secularism under the Constitution is an attitude, and a way of life, partly commanded and partly commended by the Constitution, embodying a system of values in which the relation between fellow human beings and between the State and citizen are freed from the bondage of the prejudices and loyalties of religion, race, caste, language and region and are ruled by a mutual concern for a life with dignity and culture for a society where everyone is free and equal and in which science and reason triumph over superstitious and blind belief and love of humanity over love of any particular section thereof.

24.6 Conclusion

In sum, the concept of secularism that emerged in India possessed three substantial components:

- The state would not attach itself to any one religion, which would thereby establish as the state religion.
- All citizens had the freedom of religious belief.
- The state would ensure equality among religious groups by ensuring that one group was not favoured at the expense of another. Correspondingly, the minorities were reassured that they would not be discriminated against in any way.

Therefore, in the first instance, secularism was designed to regulate debilitating religious strife, to assure the minorities of their safety and to set at rest any apprehension that the state would align itself with the dominant religion. In retrospect, it is not surprising that secularism proved to be attractive to Indian leadership. For one, secularism had historically emerged in the West as a formula to put an end to the religious wars that has devastated Europe in the sixteenth century. It was on the principle of secularism that communities that had gone to war over religion and societies that had tortured non-believers throughout the period of the Inquisition, could learn to live together. India faced similar problems. The anti-colonial struggle had provoked separate and potentially divisive communities to define themselves not only in opposition to colonialism but also in opposition to each other. This posed a distinct threat to the coherence of the new nation. The articulation of the principle of secularism, a principle that was strictly outside the ideological formulation of these identities, was designed to allow people to live together in civility. This is what contemporary critiques of secularism seem to forget.

In sum, for the country the attraction of secularism lay in the fact that it was the only prudent option for constructing a nation out of the fragmented and polarised identities that had emerged and consolidated themselves during the colonial and the anti-colonial phase. In India, where two new nations had materialised out of a blood drenched partition, i.e. India and Pakistan, the need was to forget that people who shared the same historical consciousness, the same language and the same folklore for centuries had split over religion. The need was to integrate these divided people on new ideologies, new perspectives, new issues. This issue could only be secularism that gave due recognition to religious identities and yet attempted to transcend them as far as the public sphere was concerned. *The state could not refuse to recognise the religious identities of its people.* That would have been bad politics and bad historical understanding. *What it could do was to stipulate that all religions were in principle equal.*

24.7 Further Reading

Jhingran, Saral. 1995. Secularism in India. P.53.

“Secularization” in the Encyclopedia of Religion, ed. Mircea Eliade, Vol. 13. p. 159.

Neera Chandoke. Representing the Secular Agenda for India in Mushirul Hasan (ed.)

Unit 25

Urbanization

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- 25.3 The Process of Urbanisation
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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Understand the term urban and urbanism
- Trace the historical antecedents to urbanisation in India
- Critically evaluate the theories on urbanization
- Analyse the social effects and problems of urbanisation

25.1 Introduction

I am sure you have heard the word urbanization and must have affair idea what it means. You probably associate it with growth of cities. Urbanization, indeed, is the process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits common to cities, such as trade, manufacturing, industry and management, and corresponding changes of behaviour patterns. It is the process of expansion in the entire system of interrelationships by which a population maintains itself in its habitat (Hawley, 1981). An increase in the size of towns and cities leading to growth of urban population is the most significant dimension of urbanization. The urban centers are essentially non-agricultural in character. In ancient times there have been great many cities such as Rome or Baghdad but ever since industrilisation and increasing industrial production and territory level production cities have grown phenomenally and now urbanization is very much apart of our contemporary life.

What exactly constitutes, urban and what is the process of urbanisation will be dealt with in the following sections. We will also talk about various theories associated with urbanization. We will discuss the growth of cities and some of the problems associated with urban centers as well.

25.2 Urban, Urbanism

What is an 'urban area'? The term is used in two senses – demographic and sociological. Demographically, the focus is on the size and density of population and nature of work of the majority of the adult males. Sociologically, the focus is on heterogeneity, impersonality, interdependence and the quality of life. Tonnies (1957) differentiated between *gemeinschaft* (rural) and *gesellschaft* (urban) communities in terms of social relationships and values. The former is one in which social bonds are based on close personal ties of kinship and friendship, and the emphasis is on tradition, consensus and informality, while in the latter, impersonal and secondary relationships

predominate and the interaction of people is formal, contractual and dependent on the special function or service they perform. Other sociologists like Max Weber (1961) and George Simmel (1950) have stressed on dense living conditions, rapidity of change and impersonal interaction in urban settings.

In India, the demographic and economic indexes are important in defining specific areas as town or city. The census definition of 'town' remained more or less the same for the period 1901-1951 but in 1961, a new definition was adopted. Up to 1951, 'town' included:

- 1) An inhabited locality with a total population of not less than 5,000 persons;
- 2) Every municipality, corporation and notified area of whatever size; and
- 3) All civil lines not included within municipal limits.

Thus, the primary criteria for deciding whether a particular place is a town or not was the administrative set-up rather than the size of the population. Because of this definition many of the towns in reality were nothing more than over-grown villages.

In 1961 'town' was redefined and determined on the basis of a number of empirical tests:

- a) a minimum population of 5,000,
- b) a density of not less than 1,000 per square mile,
- c) three-fourths of the occupations of the working population should be outside of agriculture, and
- d) the place should have a few characteristics and amenities such as newly founded industrial areas, large housing settlements, and places of tourist importance and civic amenities. As a result of the new definition of 'town' was a reduction in the total number of towns in India between 1951 and 1961. The 1961 basis was adopted in the 1971, 1981 and 1991 censuses too for defining towns.

Sociologists do not attach much importance to the size of population in the definition of city because the minimum population standards vary greatly. A city is an administratively defined unit of territory containing "a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals" (Wirth, 1938). Urban refers to a set of specialized, non-agricultural activities that are characteristic of, but not exclusive to, city dwellers. A ruling class with a capacity for taxation and capital accumulation and writing and its application to predictive sciences, artistic expression, and trade for vital materials are the kinds of specialized activities necessary to the definition of the emergence of a truly urban place (Childe, 1950).

Box. 25.1 Million Cities

A million city is, yes you guessed it, a city with one million (or more) inhabitants. According to the 1995 UN census these are the largest cities on the planet:

- 1) Tokyo (Japan) 27.2 million
- 2) Mexico City (Mexico), 16.9 million
- 3) Sao Paulo (Brazil) 16.8 million
- 4) New York (USA), 16.4 million
- 5) Bombay, India, 15.7 million

The 1971 census introduced the term urban agglomeration. Very often large railway colonies, university campuses, port areas, military camps etc. come up outside the statutory limits of the city or town but adjoining it. Such areas may not be themselves qualify to be treated as towns but if they formed a

continuous spread with the adjoining town, it would be realistic to treat them as urban. Such settlements have been termed as outgrowths, and may cover a whole village, or part of a village. Two or more towns may also be contiguous to each other. Such towns together with their outgrowths have been treated as one urban unit and called 'urban agglomeration'.

Box 25.2 Type of Cities

On the basis of broad common features of the cities we can classify them into following types:

Production centres – Jamshedpur, Ferozabad, Kanpur, Kolar

Centres of trade and commerce – Bombay, Madras

Capitals – Delhi, Lucknow etc.

Health and Recreation Centres – Mussoorie, Mysore, Kodaikanal

Cultural Centres – Amritsar, Ajmer, Hardwar

Diversified Cities – Varanasi

Urbanism

Urbanism has been defined by various scholars as patterns of culture and social interaction resulting from the concentration of large populations into relatively small areas. It reflects an organization of society in terms of a complex division of labour, high levels of technology, high mobility, interdependence of its members in fulfilling economic functions and impersonality in social relations (Theodorson, 1969).

Urbanism as way of life, Louis Wirth believes, may be empirically approached from three interrelated perspectives:

- as a physical structure with a population base, technology and ecological order;
- as a system of social organization with a structure and series of institutions (secondary contacts, weakening of kinship ties etc.);
- as a set of attitudes, ideas and constellation of personalities (increased personal disorganization, suicide, crime, delinquency and corruption).

25.3 The Process of Urbanization

Urbanization as a structural process of change is generally related to industrialization but it is not always the result of industrialization. Urbanization results due to the concentration of large-scale and small scale industrial and commercial, financial and administrative set up in the cities; technological development in transport and communication, cultural and recreational activities. The excess of urbanization over industrialization that makes it possible to provide employment for all persons coming to urban areas is, in fact, what sometimes leads to over urbanization. In India, a peculiar phenomenon is seen: industrial growth without a significant shift of population from agriculture to industry and of growth of urban population without a significant rise in the ratio of the urban to the total population. While in terms of ratio, there may not be a great shift from rural to urban activities, but there is still a large migration of population from rural areas to urban areas. This makes urban areas choked, there is lack of infrastructural facilities to cope with this rising populations.

Urbanization implies a cultural and social psychological process whereby people acquire the material and non-material culture, including behavioural patterns, forms of organization, and ideas that originated in, or are distinctive of the city. Although the flow of cultural influences is in both directions – both toward and away from the city – there is substantial agreement that the

cultural influences exerted by the city on non-urban people are probably more pervasive than the reverse. Urbanization seen in this light has also resulted in what Toynbee has called the “Westernization” of the world.

The idea of urbanization may be made more precise and meaningful when interpreted as aspects of diffusion and acculturation. Urbanization may be manifest either as intra-society or inter-society diffusion, that is, urban culture may spread to various parts of the same society or it may cross cultural or national boundaries and spread to other societies. It involves both borrowing and lending. On the other side of the diffusion coin is acculturation, the process whereby, individuals acquire the material possessions, behavioural patterns, social organization, bodies of knowledge, and meanings of groups whose culture differs in certain respects from their own. Urbanization as seen in this light is a complex process (Gist and Fava: 1933).

The history of urbanization in India reveals, broadly four processes of urbanization at work throughout the historical period. These are:

- a) the emergence of new social relationships among people in cities and between people in cities and those in villages through a process of social change;
- b) the rise and fall of cities with changes in the political order;
- c) the growth of cities based on new productive processes, which alter the economic base of the city; and
- d) the physical spread of cities with the inflow of migrants, who come in search of a means of livelihood as well as a new way of life.

Box 25.3

Sub-Urbanization, is closely related to over-urbanization of a city. When cities get over-crowded by population, it may result in sub-urbanization. Delhi is a typical example. Sub-urbanization means urbanization of rural areas around the cities characterized by the following features:

a sharp increase in the ‘urban (non-agricultural) uses’ of land
inclusion of surrounding areas of towns within its municipal limits, and
intensive communication of all types between town and its surrounding areas

Over Urbanization refers to the increased exemplification of the characters of urbanisation in a city or its surrounding rural area. It results due to the excessive development of urbanistic traits. Due to the expansion of the range of urban activities and occupations, greater influx of secondary functions like industry, increasing and widespread development of an intricate bureaucratic administrative network, the increased sophistication and mechanization of life and the influx of urban characters into the surrounding rural area, over urbanization gradually replaces the ruralistic and traditionalistic traits of a community. Mumbai and Calcutta are two such examples of cities.

Urbanization as a Socio-Cultural Process

Cities are social artifacts and stands apart from the countryside, in terms of the higher degree of its acceptance of foreign and cross-cultural influences. It is a melting pot of people with diverse ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Seen in this light, urbanization is a socio-cultural process of transformation of folk, peasant or feudal village societies.

India has a continuous history of urbanization since 600 BC. Over this period, three major socio-cultural processes have shaped the character of her urban societies. These are Aryanization, Persianization and Westernization.

The Aryan phase of urbanization generated three types of cities:

- a) the capital cities, where the secular power of the kshatriyas was dominant;
- b) the commercial cities dominated by the vaishyas; and
- c) the sacred cities, which, for a time, were dominated by Buddhists and Jains, who were kshatriyas, and later by brahmins.

With the advent of the Muslim rules from the 10th century AD, the urban centers in India acquired an entirely new social and cultural character. The city became Islamic; Persian and later Urdu was the official language of state and Persian culture dominated the behaviour of the urban elite.

The impact of 150 years of British rule in India, that is, Westernization, is clearly visible in various aspects of city life today – in administration, in education, and in the language of social interaction of the city people and their dress and mannerisms. Urbanism is clearly identified with westernisation.

Reflection and Action 25.1

Based on your experience, what do you think is the present cultural character of city/cities in India? Do you think it is westernisation which is the dominating cultural impact or are there other influences? Write a note on this and share it with friends or fellow classmates at the study centre.

Urbanization as a Political - Administrative Process

The administrative and political developments have played an important role in urbanization in the past and they continue to be relevant today. From about the 5th century BC to the 18th century AD, urban centers in India emerged, declined or even vanished with the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. Patliputra, Delhi, Madurai and Golconda are all examples of cities that flourished, decayed, and sometimes revived in response to changes in the political scene. The administrative or political factor often acts as an initial stimulus for urban growth; which is then further advanced by the growth of commercial and industrial activities.

Urbanization as an Economic Process

Urbanization in modern times is essentially an economic process. Today, the city is a focal point of productive activities. It exists and grows on the strength of the economic activities existing within itself. It is the level and nature of economic activity in the city that generates growth and, therefore, further urbanization.

Urbanization as a Geographical Process

The proportion of a country's total population living in urban areas has generally been considered as a measure of the level of urbanization. Population growth in urban areas is partly a function of natural increase in population and partly the result of migration from rural areas and smaller towns. An increase in the level of urbanization is possible only through migration of people from rural to urban areas. Hence, migration or change of location of residence of people is a basic mechanism of urbanization. This is essentially a geographical process, in the sense that it involves the movement of people from one place to another.

There are three major types of spatial movements of people relevant to the urbanization process. These are

- a) the migration of people from rural villages to towns and cities leading to macro-urbanization
- b) the migration of people from smaller towns and cities to larger cities and

capitals leading to metropolisation. It is essentially a product of the centralization of administrative, political and economic forces in the country at the national and state capitals. It is also a product of intense interaction between cities and the integration of the national economy and urban centers into a viable independent system.

- c) The spatial overflow of metropolitan population into the peripheral urban feigned villages leading to a process of sub-urbanization. It is, essentially, an outgrowth of metropolization and here there is a reverse flow of people from the city to the countryside.

25.4 Urbanization in India

In this section, we will the historical background to urbanization in India and see how influential history was in the present situation of urban places and process of urbanization. Urbanization did not occur once but has recurred over and over in history as societies have urbanized at different times. It is an ongoing process that has never stopped and has rarely, showed since it's beginning.

India has long history of urbanization with spatial and temporal discontinuities. The first phase of urbanization in the Indus valley is associated with the Harappan civilization dating back to 2350BC. The two cities of Mohanjodaro and Harappa represent the climax of urban development attained in the Harappan culture. This great urban civilization came to end at about 1500 B.C, possibly as a result of Aryan invasion.

The second phase of urbanization in India began around 600 BC. The architects of this phase were the Aryans in the North and the Dravidians in the South. From this period onwards, for about 2500 years, India has had more or less continuous history of urbanization. This period saw the formation of early historical cities and also the growth of cities in number and in size especially during the Mauryan and post-Mauryan eras.

The Mughal period stands out as a second high watermark of urbanization in India (the first occurring during the Mauryan period), when many of India's cities were established.

The early part of British rule saw a decline in the level of Indian urbanization. The main reasons for the decline of cities during this period are:

1. the lack of interest on the part of the British in the prosperity and economic development of India, and
2. the ushering in of the industrial revolution in England.

During the latter half of British rule, Indian cities regained some of their last importance; further, the British added several new towns and cities, in addition to generating newer urban forms in the existing cities.

The following elements constituted the permanent components of the Indian urban system:

1. the military-political town, serving as a center for the flow of cash nexus in the society and often for the redistributive system, and
2. the temple or the full-fledged temple town.

The great variations exiting among the different periods and areas developed with respect to (a) the degree of existence of a more centralized hierarchy; (b) the relative importance of coastal towns in relation to those of the hinterland and (c) the importance of temple centres and networks in relation to the more political and commercial towns.

Facets of British Influence on Urbanization

During the 150 years of British rule, India's urban landscape went through a radical transformation. The major contributions of the British to the Indian urban scene were:

1. The creation of the three metropolitan port cities (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras) which emerged as the leading colonial cities of the world.
2. The creation of Hill stations (Simla, Darjeeling, Mahabaleshwar etc.) and plantation settlements in Assam, Kerala and elsewhere.
3. Introduction of the Civil Lines and the Cantonments. The Civil Lines contained the administrative offices and courts as well as residential areas for the officers, whereas the Cantonments were most often built near major towns for considerations of security.
4. The introduction of the railways and modern industry which led to the creation of new industrial townships such as Jamshedpur, Asansol, Dhanbad and so on, and
5. The improvements in urban amenities and urban administration.

In the British period, Indian cities became the focal points of westernisation. Schools and colleges trained boys and girls in western thought and languages. A new western oriented urban elite emerged whose dress, eating habits and social behaviour reflected western values and attitudes. With the process of westernization, there has been a concomitant alienation of the urban elite from the urban and rural masses.

Urbanization in the Post-Independence Period

This period has witnessed rapid urbanization in India on a scale never before achieved. The major changes that have occurred in India's urban scene after independence are:

- 1) the influx of refugees and their settlement, primarily in urban areas in northern India,
- 2) the building of new administrative cities, such as Chandigarh, Bhubaneswar and Gandhinagar,
- 3) the construction of new industrial cities and townships near major cities,
- 4) the rapid growth of one-lakh and million cities
- 5) the stagnation and decline of small towns
- 6) the massive growth of slums and the rural-urban fringe and
- 7) the introduction of city planning and the general improvement in civic amenities.

25.5 Theories of Urbanization

City forms the central point of urban sociology. Like many other sociological categories, the city is an abstraction composed of concrete entities like residences and shops and an assortment of many functions. A place is legally made a city by a declaration by a competent authority. Sorokin and Zimmerman enumerate eight characteristics in which the urban world differs from the rural world. These are (1) occupation (2) environment (3) size of community (4) density of population (5) heterogeneity (6) social differentiation and stratification (7) mobility and (8) system of interactions.

The study of cities was a subject that had already explored in the second part of the 19th century in early classical sociology with its celebrated dichotomies,

such as Maine's (1931) distinction between status and contract and Morgan's (1877) contrast between savagery, barbarism and civilization. This aspect was further developed by Tonnies (1957), who contrasted *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, and by Durkheim (1964), who distinguished between "mechanical and "organic" solidarity. Tonnies and Durkheim believed that the *gemeinschaft* type of social organization, or mechanical solidarity, is fully developed in cities, particularly in modern cities.

In 1920-1940s a number of sociologists from the University of Chicago put forward ideas which for many years were the chief basis for theory and research on urban sociology. Two strands of the Chicago school that we are going to examine are the ecological approach and the 'urbanism as a way of life' approach developed by Wirth.

Louis Wirth - Urbanism as a Way of Life

Wirth was one of the pioneers of the study of urbanism and his was the first systematic attempt to distinguish the concepts of urbanism and urbanization. His social-psychological theory investigates the human behaviour in an urban environment. He indicated that size, density and heterogeneity – regarded as the principal traits in defining cities – are conducive to specific behavioral patterns and moral attitudes (Wirth, 1938). For him "a city is a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals". Urbanism is that complex of traits that makes up the characteristic mode of life in cities. Urbanism, as a way of life, may be approached empirically from three interrelated perspectives:

(1) as a physical structure comprising a population base, a technology, and an ecological order; (2) as a system of social organization involving a characteristic social structure, a series of social institutions, and a typical pattern of social relationships; and (3) as a set of attitudes and ideas, and a constellation of personalities engaging in typical forms of collective behaviour and subject to characteristic mechanisms of social control.

Louis Wirth shows two kinds of forces operating in urban society: the force of segregation and the melting pot effect; which has many unifying aspects like uniform system of administration etc. However, he concludes that urban society is based on a means-to-end rationality, which is exploitative and where the individual is isolated through anonymity. Wirth believed that the density of life in cities produced neighbourhoods, which have the distinctive characteristics of traditional communities.

Wirth's theory is important for its recognition that urbanism is not just part of a society, but expresses and influences the wider social system. However, Wirth's observations are based on American cities, which are generalized to urban centers everywhere, where situations are different.

The Ecological Approach

In natural sciences the term ecology is used to understand the relationship plants and animals have with their environment. The term is used in a similar way to understand the process of urbanisation, by such scholars as Robert Park, Ernest Burgess and Amos Hawley. The scholars of ecological approach feel that cities do not grow randomly but grow along lines and in response to features which are advantageous to it—along rivers, near natural resources, in the intersection of trading routes etc. They feel that cities become ordered in to "natural areas", through a process of competition, invasion and succession. Patterns of location, movement and relocation in cities follow similar principles. These scholars view cities as a map of areas with distinct characteristics. Burgess sees them as concentric zones—Central Business District (with

concentration of trade, retail, business and related activities are located), the Transition Zone to the outer fringes which he calls the Commuter Zone-the satellite towns and suburbs. Process of invasion and succession occur within these segments.

Some of the principles of these theories can be applied to Indian situation especially to growth's such as suburbs such as Gurgaon in outer fringes of Delhi or the growth of suburbs in Bombay but largely the theory is based on American cities which have distinct characteristics. The theory, also, underemphasises the role of planning and design in cities.

Urbanism and Created Environment : Harvey and Castells

More recent theorist such as David Harvey and Manuel Castells have stressed that urbanism is not an autonomous process, but is part of a larger political and economic processes and changes.

In modern urbanism, Harvey points out space is continually restructured. The process is determined by large firms, who decide where they should open their businesses, factories etc and by policies, controls and initiatives asserted by governments which can change the landscape of a city.

Like Harvey, Castells stresses that spatial form of a city is very much related to the larger process of the society. Castells further adds the dimension of the struggles and conflicts of various groups who make up the cities. He gives the example of gay community who have reorganized the structure of San Francisco city. He believes that it is not only big corporations, businesses and government which influence the shape of a city but also the communities and groups who live in cities.

Harvey and Castells analysis of urbanisation and urban situation adds an important dimension – the political economy of a system.

Reflection and Action 25.2

According to Harvey and Castells the special form of a city is very much influenced by the politico-economic considerations of corporations, business houses and governments.

Give examples from the Indian cities to support the above statement.

Indian Sociologists : Rao and Bose

M.S.A. Rao (1970), analysis urbanisation and urbanism keeping in mind the larger social structures of Indian society. For him, urbanism is a heterogeneous process and hence there can be many forms of urbanisms giving rise to many types of urbanization. Rao states that the dichotomy between cities and villages is incorrect as both have the same structural features of caste and kinship and are parts of the same civilization. Moreover, urbanization and westernization are not identical and should not be confused. Urbanization does not lead to the breakdown of traditional structures of caste and joint family. The traditional and modern structures coexist in the urban milieu because of which various types of urbanisms exist – post-industrial, pre-industrial, western, non-western etc. Further, urbanization is seen in relation to social change and no real social transformation is associated with it. However, due to urbanization new forms of social organization and association have emerged. Thus, for Rao, urbanization is a complex multifaceted process comprising of ideological, cultural, historical, demographic, comparative, traditional and sociological elements. Rao defines a city as a center of urbanization and urban way of life. Urbanization is a two way process. Urbanization in India is not a uniform process but occurs along different axes

- administrative, political, commercial, religious and educational - giving rise to several types of urbanisms. These different axes give rise to different types of contact which the city has with the villagers leading to distinct patterns of urbanization.

He distinguishes three kinds of situations of social change in rural areas resulting from urbanization: villages near an industrial town, villages with a sizable number of emigrants working in towns and cities, and villages on the metropolitan fringe. Rao believed that through the study of migration, one could observe the similarities, dissimilarities and continuity between villages and towns. Rao's sociological approach is the most complete approach to the study of urbanization because he tries to examine them in all their different facets and relate these facets to one another and to a sociological understanding of urbanism and urbanization.

Ashish Bose's demographic classification emphasizes quantitative factors like demography rather than qualitative factors in defining urbanization. For him, urbanization, in the demographic sense, is an increase in the proportion of the urban population (U) to the total population (T) over a period of time. As long as U/T increases there is urbanization. The process of urbanization is a continuing process which is not merely a concomitant of industrialization but a concomitant of the whole gamut of factors underlying the process of economic growth and social change.

Bose outlines the characteristic features of urbanization in India. He made a decade-wise differentiation in terms of percentage of urbanization. Here urbanization is affected by trends in migration. He recognizes the push-back and turn-over factors of migration. He considered four variables affecting urban growth:

- a) Proportion of new towns to total urban population;
- b) Proportion of declassified towns to the total population;
- c) Proportion of declining towns to the total population;
- d) Proportion of rapidly growing towns to the total urban population.

Only when these are combined, it will be possible to analyze the process of urbanization in India. Bose used the concepts of towns and cities interchangeably.

25.6 Social Effects of Urbanization in India

Urbanisation has far reaching effects on larger societal process and structures. Let us capture some of these change and effects in the following sub sections.

Family and kinship

Urbanization affects not only the family structure but also intra and inter family relations, as well as the functions the family performs. With urbanization, there is a disruption of the bonds of community and the migrant faces the problem to replace old relationships with new ones and to find a satisfactory means of continuing relationship with those left behind. Several empirical studies of urban families conducted by scholars like I.P. Desai, Kapadia and Aileen Ross, have pointed out that urban joint family is being gradually replaced by nuclear family, the size of the family is shrinking, and kinship relationship is confined to two or three generations only. In his study of 423 families in Mahuva town in Gujrat, I.P. Desai (1964) showed that though the structure of urban family is changing, the spirit of individualism is not growing in the families. He found that 74 percent families were residentially nuclear but functionally and in property joint, and 21 percent were joint in residence and functioning as well as in property and 5 percent families were nuclear.

Kapadia (1959) in his study of 1,162 families in rural and urban (Navsari) areas in Gujrat found that while in rural areas, for every two nuclear families there were three joint families; in urban areas, nuclear families were 10 percent more than joint families.

Aileen Ross (1962) in her study of 157 Hindu families belonging to middle and upper classes in Bangalore found that

1. about 60 percent of the families are nuclear
2. the trend today is towards a break with the traditional joint family form into the nuclear family form into the nuclear family unit.
3. Small joint family is now the most typical form of family life in urban India.
4. Relations with one's distant kin are weakening or breaking.

Though intra-family and inter-family relations are changing, it does not mean that youngsters no longer respect their elders, or children completely ignore their obligations to their parents and siblings, or wives challenge the authority of their husbands. One important change is that 'husband-dominant' family is being replaced by 'egalitarian family' where wife is given a share in the decision-making process. I.P. Desai maintains 'in spite of strains between the younger and older generations, the attachment of the children to their families is seldom weakened'.

Sylvia Vatuk maintains that the ideal of family "jointness" is still upheld although living separate. The extended family acts as a ceremonial unit and close ties with the members of agnatic extended family are maintained. Also, larger kinship clusters including groups of bilaterally and affinally related household within the same or closely adjacent mohallas exist. There is a tendency towards bilateral kinship in urban areas. In her study of Rayapur in 1974-1976, Vatuk mentions the increasing tendencies toward individualizing the marital bond and decline of practices such as levirate widow inheritance, widow remarriage, marriage by exchange, polygyny etc. The impact of urbanization is also seen in the urban pattern of increasingly homogenized values and ways of behaving.

Thus, gradual modification of the family structure in urban India is taking place such as diminishing size of the family, reduction in functions of family, emphasis on conjugal relationship etc. Kinship is an important principle of social organisation in cities and there is structural congruity between joint family on one hand and requirements of industrial and urban life on the other. In his study of nineteen families of outstanding business leaders in Madras, Milton Singer(1968) argues that a modified version of traditional Indian joint family is consistent with urban and industrial setting.

Urbanization and Caste

It is generally held that caste is a rural phenomenon whereas class is urban and that with urbanization, caste transforms itself into class. But it is necessary to note that the caste system exists in cities as much as it does in villages although there are significant organisational differences.

Caste identity tends to diminish with urbanization, education and the development of an orientation towards individual achievement and modern status symbols. Andre Beteille (1966) has pointed out that among the westernized elite, class ties are much more important than caste ties.

A noticeable change today is the fusion of sub-castes and fusion of castes. Kolenda (1984) has identified three kinds of fusion: (i) on the job and in newer

neighbourhood in the city, persons of different sub-castes and of different castes meet; (ii) inter-sub-caste marriages take place, promoting a fusion of subcastes; (iii) democratic politics also fosters the fusion of sub-castes.

Studies of many sociologists like Srinivas (1962), Ghurye (1962), Gore (1970), D'Souza (1974), Rao (1974), have shown that caste system continues to persist and exert its influence in some sectors of urban social life while it has changed its form in some other sectors. Caste solidarity is not as strong as in urban areas as in the rural areas. Caste panchayats are very weak in cities. There exists a dichotomy between workplace and domestic situation and both caste and class situations co-exist.

In respect to the change in the distribution of power, we find that in pre-British India, upper caste was also the upper class. But with education and new types of occupations, this correlation of caste and class is no longer true. Beteille (1971) pointed out that higher caste does not always imply higher class. This disharmony is most often found in the Indian cities where new job opportunities have developed.

The establishment of caste association again reveals the vitality of caste system. The most powerful role that caste identity is playing in contemporary period is in politics which governs the power dimension. Caste acts as a 'vote bank' in both rural and urban areas and because of this, it is being revived in urban areas. Caste also becomes a basis for organising trade union like associations, which serves as interest groups which protect the rights and interest of its caste members.

Certain aspects of behaviour associated with caste ideology have now almost disappeared in the urban context. The rules of commensality, or inter-dining among castes, have very little meaning in the cities. The frequency of inter-caste and inter-region marriages has increased.

Neighbourhood interaction in urban settlements is marked by a high degree of informality and caste and kinship are major basis of such participation. Lynch's (1967) study of an untouchable caste, Jatavs, in Agra showed that Jatavs had well-knit mohalla (ward) organization which resembled a village community in many respects. Doshi's (1968) study of two caste wards in the city of Ahmedabad also refers to the traditional community organization.

Urbanization and Status of Women

Women constitute an important section of rural urban migrants. They migrate at the time of marriage and also when they are potential workers in the place of destination (Rao). While middle class women get employed in the white collar jobs and professions, lower class women find jobs in the informal sector. Women are also found in the formal sector as industrial workers.

The onslaught of forces of rapid industrialization in a patriarchal social system led men to move out in order to qualify for the labour market by acquiring specialized skills. Women were traditionally relegated to the informal and family setting.

But many positive developments took place in the socio-economic lives of women as a result of increasing urbanization. Increasing number of women have taken to white-collar jobs and entered different professions. These professions were instrumental in enhancing the social and economic status of women, thereby meaning increased and rigorous hours of work, professional loyalty along with increased autonomy. The traditional and cultural institutions remaining the same, crises of values and a confusion of norms have finally resulted. The personally and socially enlightened woman is forced to perform the dual roles - the social and the professional roles (Gore (1968), Kapur (1970),

Ross (1983)).

In the cities of India, the high level education among girls is significantly associated with the smaller family size. Though education of women has risen the age of marriage and lowered the birth rate, it has not brought about any radical change in the traditional pattern of arranged marriages with dowry. Margaret Cormack (1961) found in her study of 500 university students that girls were ready to go to college and mix with boys but they wanted their parents to arrange their marriage. Women want new opportunities but demand old securities as well.

The status of urban women, because of being comparatively educated and liberal, is higher than that of rural women. However in the labour market, women are still in a disadvantaged situation. D'Souza (1963) reveals the psychological, household and social problems to which they are exposed.

Reflection and Action 25.3

While women in cities have more opportunities to find employment, both as white collar workers or in the unorganized sector, they are open to more vulnerabilities than the rural women

Find out from workingwomen in cities, both in organized and unorganized sector, what these added disadvantages and vulnerabilities are.

Thus, while rural women continue to be dependent on men both economically and socially, urban women are comparatively independent and enjoy greater freedom.

Urbanization and Rural Life

Urbanization through migration to urban centres is a global phenomenon. Many migrate to cities because of the availability of jobs there. Migration has become a continuous process affecting the social, economic and cultural lives of the villagers. Rao (1974) examined the social changes in a metropolitan fringe village (Yadavpur). He distinguished three kinds of situations of social change in rural areas resulting from urbanization:

1. In villages from where a large number of people have sought employment in far off cities, urban employment becomes a symbol of higher social prestige.
2. In villages situated near an industrial town with a sizable number of emigrants working in towns and cities, face the problems of housing, marketing and social ordering.
3. The growth of metropolitan cities accounts for the third type of urban impact on the surrounding villages. As the city expands, some villages become the rural pockets in the city areas. Hence the villagers participate directly in the economic, political and social activities, and cultural life of the city.

Srinivas (1962) outlined the general impact of both industrialisation and urbanization on villages. He showed how the different areas of social life are being affected by urban influences. He pointed out that emigration in South India has had a caste component as it was the Brahmins who first left their villages for towns and took advantage of western education and modern professions. At the same time as they retained their ancestral lands they continued to be at the top of the rural socio-economic hierarchy. Again, in the urban areas they had a near monopoly of all non-manual posts.

Holmstrom (1969) analysed the political network of leaders in a rural pocket within the Bangalore Corporation in the context of an election. Majumdar

(1958) in his study of Mohana village near Lucknow, noted that the village economy is influenced by the urban market, although in an indirect way. Eames' (1954) study of a village in U.P. showed that many emigrants have left their families behind, and they regularly send money home. Such a 'money-order economy' has enabled the dependents to clear off loans, build houses and educate their children.

R.D. Lambert (1962) in his extensive review of studies concerning the impact of urban society upon village life, points out different degrees of urban influence on the rural life. Social changes are maximal in areas where displacement is sudden and substantial due to urbanization.

Thus migration is a key process underlying the growth of urbanization. Far from being a mechanical process, it is governed by economic, social and cultural factors. This culture contact initiates certain processes of interaction and different modes of social adjustment in urban areas. Migration has acquired a special significance in the context of commercialization of agriculture; it has major implications for urbanization, slums and social change; it has notable feedback effects on the place of origin, as the migrants maintain different kinds and degrees of contact, thus increasing the continuity between rural and urban areas. Many cultural traits are diffused from area one to another. Also, new thoughts, ideologies are also diffused from the cities to the rural areas due to increase in communication via radio, television, newspaper etc.

Urban Politics

Rao (1974) has identified four problem areas in the study of political institutions, organization and processes in the urban context: 1) Formal political structure 2) Informal political organizations 3) Small town politics and 4) Violence.

There is the formal political structure, municipal or corporation government where national, regional and local political parties compete for positions of power. Lloyd Rudolph's (1961) essay on Populist Government in Madras outlines the struggle for power in the Madras Corporation and shows the decisive dominance of the D.M.K., a regional political party. It also reveals the control exercised by the party leaders in the context of the anti-Brahmin movement and the populist support the party has acquired. The study brings out clearly the relationship between urbanization and the changing power structure.

Besides formal structures of power, informal political organisations operate through caste, religious and sectarian groups, and occupational categories. Associations formed on these lines acquire political dimensions in so far as they act as pressure groups, and in some cases they even form part of organized political parties. Lynch's (1968) study of the *Politics of Untouchability* describes the processes by which the Jatavs become a politically viable group in Agra city. It is significant to note that they form part of the Republican Party to compete for position of power at the city, state and national levels.

A third aspect of politics in the urban context refers to the small town politics where elites, factions or ethnic groups, more than political parties, are significant in understanding the power structure. Ethnic groups get politicized and act as vote banks and pressure groups articulating their interests, and compete for various benefits of urban life. This results in a situation of conflict between ethnic groups and between the migrant ethnic groups and the locals. A.C. Mayer (1953) in his study of municipal elections in Devas in Madhya Pradesh analysed the networks and 'action-sets' of influential leaders. R.G. Fox (1969) showed that a Muslim-Bania conflict characterizes the politics in a small town in Uttar Pradesh. There has been a shift in the authority from the Muslim zamindars to enterprising banias (merchants).

Another important feature of urban politics is violence resulting from communal conflict, political disturbance, student strikes and regional armies such as the Shiv Sena in Bombay. Besides these problems of urban violence, Tangri (1962) and Kothari (1970) have drawn attention to the political implications of urbanization. Different conflict situations have arisen with the growth of urbanization such as unemployment and slums which contribute to political instability.

Owen M Lynch (1980) studied the political mobilization and ethnicity among the Adi-Dravidas in a Bombay slum, who are a low-ranking caste from southern India and who have migrated to Bombay. Here, different political parties compete for their votes. One party calls on them to identify as 'untouchables' on all-India basis; another party bids them to remember their South Indian roots. The way in which the Adi-Dravidas define themselves politically is thus related both to their position in Bombay as rural migrants from another region and to their caste.

25.7 Problems of Urbanization

The patterns of urbanization in India has been marked by regional and inter-state diversities, large scale rural to urban migration, insufficient infrastructural facilities, growth of slums and other allied problems. Some of the important problems of urbanization faced in different parts of India are as follows:

Housing and Slums

There is acute shortage of housing in urban areas and much of the available accommodation is qualitatively of sub-standard variety. This problem has tended to worsen over the years due to rapid increase in population, fast rate of urbanization and proportionately inadequate addition to the housing stock. Millions of people pay excessive rent which is beyond their means. In our profit-oriented economy, private developers and colonizers find little profit in building houses in cities for the poor and the lower middle class, and they concentrate in meeting the housing needs of the rich as it is gainful.

With large scale migration to urban areas many find that the only option they have is substandard conditions of slums. Slums are characterised by sub-standard housing, over crowding, lack of electrification, ventilation, sanitation, roads and drinking water facilities. They have been the breeding ground of diseases, environmental pollution, demoralisation and many social tensions.

With India's slum population standing at nearly 40%, slum dwellers form 44% of population in Delhi, 45% in Mumbai, 42% in Calcutta and 39% in Chennai

Over Crowding

In major cities in India like Bombay, Calcutta, Pune and Kanpur, the population between 85% and 90% of households lives in one or two rooms. In some homes, five to six persons live in one room. Over-crowding encourages deviant behaviour, spreads diseases and creates conditions for mental illness, alcoholism and riots. One effect of dense urban living is people's apathy and indifference.

Oscar Lewis' 'Culture of Poverty' (1965) was an attempt to develop a model of the behaviour of the poor in a variety of cultural settings. It is a distinct way of life that develops among the lowest stratum in capitalistic societies in response to economic deprivation and inequality. Once people adapt to poverty, attitudes and behaviours that initially developed in response to economic deprivation are passed on to subsequent generations through socialization.

Water supply, Drainage and Sanitation

No city has round the clock water supply in India. Intermittent supply results in a vacuum being created in empty water lines which often suck in pollutants through leaking joints. Many small towns have no main water supply at all and are dependent on the wells. Drainage situation is equally bad. Because of the non-existence of a drainage system, large pools of stagnant water can be seen in city even in summer months.

Removing garbage, cleaning drains and unclogging sewers are the main jobs of municipalities and municipal corporations in Indian cities. There is total lack of motivation to tackle the basic sanitation needs of the cities. The spread of slums in congested urban areas and lack of civic sense among the settlers in these slums further adds to the growing mound of filth and diseases.

Transportation and Traffic

Absence of planned and adequate arrangements for traffic and transport is another problem in urban centres in India. Majority of people use buses and tempos, while a few use rail as transit system. The increasing number of two-wheelers and cars make the traffic problem worse. They cause air pollution as well. Moreover, the number of buses plying the metropolitan cities is not adequate and commuters have to spend long hours to travel.

Power Shortage

Power supply has remained insufficient in a majority of the urban centres in India. The use of electrical gadgets has increased in cities, and establishment of new industries and the expansion of the old ones has also increased dependence on electricity. Conflict over power supply between two states often creates severe power crisis for people in the city.

Box 25.4 Garbage

Of about 3,000 to 5,000 tonnes of garbage generated in one day in a metropolitan city, hardly 50 to 60 percent is cleared. Out of 1,500-2,000 million litres of sewage generated in a day, hardly 1,000 to 1,500 litres a day is collected. This is when the total budget of municipal corporations of cities like Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai and Chennai varies between Rs.1,000 and Rs.1,500 crore per annum.

(Source: India Today, October, 31, 1994)

Pollution

Our towns and cities are major polluters of the environment. Several cities discharge 40 to 60 percent of their entire sewage and industrial effluents untreated into the nearby rivers. Urban industry pollutes the atmosphere with smoke and toxic gases from its chimneys. All these, increases the chances of diseases among the people living in the urban centres.

According to UNICEF, lakhs of urban children die or suffer from diarrhoea, tetanus, measles etc. because of poor sanitary conditions and water contamination. As a long-term remedy, what is needed is using new techniques of waste collection, new technology for garbage-disposal and fundamental change in the municipal infrastructure and land-use planning.

All the above-mentioned urban problems are because of migration and over-urbanization, industrial growth, apathy and inefficiency of the administration and defective town planning. Solutions to urban problems lie in systematic development of urban centres and creation of job opportunities, regional planning along with city planning, encouraging industries to move to backward areas, adopting a pragmatic Housing Policy and structural decentralisation of local self government itself.

Reflection and Action 25.4

What do you think are additional problems of urbanization, which have not been mentioned in our unit?

In your opinion, what is the way out of the malaises affecting urban centres in India?

25.8 Conclusion

As you can see urbanization is an on going phenomena which is very difficult to capture through any single approach or analysis, especially in India. In this unit we have tried to capture different aspects of urbanisation-the history to present situation. the various approaches to study urbanisation and the problems and consequences of urbanization. And we find that it is a process which is linked to many larger structures and process. As globalization process is speeding up, connecting the world in unprecedented ways, there is a suggestion that cities throughout the world will come to exhibit organizational forms increasingly similar to one another as technology becomes more accessible throughout the global system. Some theorists suggest that increasingly divergent forms of urban organization are likely to emerge due to differences in the timing and pace of the urbanization process, differences in the position of cities within the global system, and increasing effectiveness of deliberate planning of the urbanization process by centralized governments holding differing values and, therefore, pursuing a variety of goals for the future.

25.9 Further Reading

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Unit 26

MIGRATION

Contents

- 26.1 Introduction
- 26.2 Understanding Migration
- 26.3 Explaining Migration
- 26.4 Types of Migration
- 26.5 Migration streams
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Learning Objectives

This unit will help you to explain

- what is meant by migration and various explanations on migration
- various types of migration and the factors which are involved in migration
- the streams of migration and their impact

26.1 Introduction

Human beings have tendency to move from place to place in search of better life or sometimes through compulsion. They have migrated from place to place throughout history. In this century where globalisation has made distant place more connected than ever migration has become an important feature. An attempt has been made here to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of migration. It is generally believed that migration is one of the most significant factors leading to population change. Human beings are on the move, even though the population has settled down in geographical space all over the world. Historical records show that people moved away from the age-old nomadism long ago and have been moving from one place to the other for various reasons. The reasons for migration may be different and specific to individuals and families.

This Unit deals with the meaning and origin of the migration process with special reference to India. The first section deals with the concept of migration in the context of economic development. In the second section an attempt has been made to classify migration into different types. The third section deals with examples of internal and external migration. The fourth section deals with a set of factors of migration. However, the migration is induced mainly by economic opportunities available in the cities. There are several social factors, which also play a role in migration. The best example is the migration of women from their parental home to the home of their spouse after marriage. There is a demographic factor for migration. The supposedly surplus labour force in a certain age group out-migrates from the place of their residence/birth to the nearby towns or far-off cities which seem to be holding a promise for a better future. The fifth section deals with the impact of migration on the places of origin and the places of destination. These regions register the impact of migration on the population structure. The last section deals with the migration trends in the world in general with special reference to India. Statistical material is available in the census records to indicate the volume and direction of intra-state and inter-state migration.

26.2 Understanding Migration

The term migration refers to the movement of organisms like animals and birds in geographical space. It also refers to the movement of people, as individuals or groups, from one place to the other. Migration thus means a change of residence. The distance, direction and duration of migration is not important, even though any of the three factors may play a role in defining the character of migration in a country.

There are several factors, which induce people to migrate. The reasons may be economic, social or political. When people migrate within the same country it is called *internal migration*. When migration involves crossing the boundaries of a given country, it is called *international migration*. In the recent history of the world large volumes of population have migrated to long distances. For example, the Jews migrated from Germany to other parts of the world to avoid persecution under Hitler's Nazi regime. Another example of large-scale migration in the recent world history is the movement of people following the partition of British India and independence in 1947. The Hindus and the Sikhs in the newly created dominion of Pakistan migrated to India. In return the Muslims of India migrated to Pakistan. It is estimated that during the period 1947-1950 ten million people migrated from Pakistan to India and 7.5 million Muslims migrated from India to Pakistan.

As is generally known a census of population is taken every ten years. It is a convention followed by all countries of the world. In India a census of population has been conducted on a decennial basis since the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century. The latest census was conducted in 2001. According to the census definition, a migrant is one who at a given census was enumerated at a place other than his/her place of birth. His/her stay at the present place of residence may be of any duration – short or long. Demographers generally refer to inward migration as *immigration*, and outward migration as *emigration*. It is obvious that migration is an important factor of change in the characteristics of population as distributed in geographical space.

As stated earlier most governments in the world conduct a census of population after every ten years. The data are collected on aspects, such as the place of birth, and the place of enumeration at a certain census. It is vital information for the study of migration within the country or outside. A migrant is a person who has crossed a certain boundary, be it a *mauza* [revenue village], a municipal boundary, a tehsil, a district, a state, or a country. The distance covered and a certain length of time spent across that boundary in a new area of residence, away from the place of birth, are important factors in defining the characteristics of the migrants.

26.3 Explanations of Migration

Sociologists, demographers and geographers have focussed their attention on the study of migration in order to understand the implications of a certain type of the movement of people from one place to the other. Migration results in multi-dimensional changes in the population composition - ethnic, ethno-lingual, religious, demographic, cultural and economic. The structural contexts of migrants itself has bearing in migration and what it means to be a migrant.

Most of the explanations on migration have concentrated heavily on demographic aspects. And have tended to explain migration in terms of push and pull factors. Ashish Bose for instance explains Migration in India from rural to Urban from a demographic perspective. The push factors which operate in places of origin, in this case the rural areas, is lack of resources, unemployment, overpopulation, drought or floods or such other natural calamities, essentially all such factors which makes a decent living standards impossible. The pull

factors of cities are many- employment opportunities, entertainment , education facilities, trade centres, institutional set ups, availability of opportunities , secular environment etc. Ashish Bose, argues that the push and pull factors should be interpreted in overall demographic contexts. Under conditions of high natural increase in population, not only in rural areas but in the urban areas as well (as a result of high urban birth rates and rapidly declining death rates), the push factor operates (Bose, 1963). He calls it as 'push back' factor. He showed that for every 100 persons who migrate to urban areas for better employment, 254 persons come in search of employment. Another type of urban push, which has been pointed out by Bose is the absence of social security in urban areas.

Most sociological studies on migration have analysed the related aspect of migration and how migration affects the geographical spaces and how it brings about transformation in social structures. Studies in India have been largely around the issues of identity transformation for immigrants , most of these studies are concentrated on the Indian Diaspora which moved across continents. As for internal migration, which has largely been rural to urban, the studies have dealt with issues that are the larger theoretical issues of whether there is continuity between social structures of rural India with Urban India or whether there are changes. Thus, Scholars such as David Peacock have argued that there is no dichotomy between urban and rural social structures. Reacting to this thesis, M.S.A. Rao argues that this "is an over simplification of the similarities between the village and the traditional city. The city in the past, he asserts provided the ground for maximum caste activity. Whereas Pocock was right in pointing out that urbanization is not co-terminus with westernization, he , however, oversimplified the similarity between the village and the traditional city. Although, religion, caste and kinship are the bases of social organization in both village and towns, there are significant difference in the working of these in the two contexts. For instance, while *jajmani* (hereditary services) relations were pronounced in villages, the *mahajan* or guild organizations were prominent in cities. In the traditional urban context, the institutional framework and the constraints in which religion , caste and kinship operated are not he same in villages.

Most scholars look at migration as essentially as a male dominated phenomena and so there have been very few studies, which look at migration from a gender perspective. Meenakshi Thapan in her recent book *Transnational Migration and Politics of Identity*, argues that 'any theory on migration...for a holistic perspective...must account for it in terms of race, religion, nationality and on gender, which much of early literature on migration is silent. She asserts "that structural ramifications of women's migration extend beyond the lives of migrant women themselves, insofar as the labour of such women is an important factor in shaping gender relations found in societies of both , the immigrants and their hosts, thereby suggesting new ways of looking at issues such as gender equality, household division of labour and at the state policies regarding welfare positions"(Thapan, 2005:17).

These are some of the main approaches that we have discussed above, which discuss various aspects related to migration, In our next section we will look at various types of migration.

26.4 Types of Migration

Migration is of different types. However, there is no consensus among the scholars about the typology of migration. These types can be ordinarily defined as cyclical or circulatory, forced, impelled, internal/external, early/primitive, seasonal or periodic. Trewartha has quoted Peterson who had suggested five general classes of migration. They were: primitive, forced, impelled, free and

mass (Trewartha, 1969, p. 144).

Cyclic or Circulatory Migration

Movements of individuals that involve only a temporary change of residence are generally not considered as migration. This type of movement is known as nomadism or pastoral nomadism. If this movement of the people is along with their animal stock – sheep, goats and cattle between two fixed points it is called *transhumance*. For example, Gujjar Bakarwals in Jammu and Kashmir move towards the foothills in winters and the highland pastures in summers. When the winter approaches they return to their settlements in the foothills. The movement of farm workers is also a kind of cyclical migration because they follow the growing season. Tourism and commutation are not generally considered as migration.

Some migrations are *cyclic* in nature, which means that they are like oscillations/circuits (Box 3). People migrate between two fixed points. It is an annual cycle, to be completed within the same year. Pastoral nomads move with their animal stock in a circulatory way: winters in the foothills and summers in the highland pastures. The routes and the destination sites are well defined. Here one can cite the examples of Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir and the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh. Similar types of migration are common in the mountainous regions of central Asia, Africa and South America. These nomads have grazing rights on a certain aspect of the mountain range, even though they do not own the land. Governments protect their movement and grazing rights.

Migrations differ in terms of direction, distance, duration and purpose/motive behind the movement. Migration may be classified as *free* or *voluntary* as opposed to *forced* or *impelled*. Some migrations are due to *push factors*, while others are in response to *pull factors*. In extra-ordinary situations people are forced to migrate. For example, natural hazards, such as floods, drought, forest fires, avalanches in mountainous areas and earthquakes force people to run away from their homes to safer places to save their lives. In other cases, labour force moves out of the home villages to a neighbouring town or city. These are typical push factors. The assumption is that the local rural labour force is in excess of the demand. As a consequence the eligible workers move out of the village. Ingrained in these examples is the role of the so-called pull factors. When the unemployed or partially employed village-folks, do not perceive any chance of improving their daily-wage incomes in the home villages, they move out to far-off cities, such as Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai or Kolkata. These cities act as magnets. We can define these movements as a response to pull factors. Many a time push and pull factors operate together.

It is common knowledge that the major cities of India, industrial and business centres, attract people. The urban nodes have derived their working class from the so-called out-migrating regions, such as eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand. The first generation in-migrants to the big cities become role models for the younger generation. Its demonstration effect induces them to migrate to the same urban place where their predecessors have already established their roots (Pathak, P., 1995, p. 30).

Internal and External (International) Migration

Migration is also classified as *internal* and *external*. When people migrate within the country of their birth/residence/domicile, it is called *internal migration*. The word internal here means movement within the bounds of the home country. When people move from one country to another, it is called *international migration*. Such migrations involve crossing the borders of the countries. Sometimes the driving force is a push factor. When people move

out they have a perception of relative advantages and disadvantages between the alternative places they want to migrate.

Sometimes migration is a well-considered step and there is a lot of planning behind it. For example, highly skilled engineers, including software engineers, medical doctors, nurses and paramedical personnel move out of India in search of better employment opportunities abroad. The idea is to earn more. While the home country does not have any scope for higher income, the country of destination attracts them and induces them to migrate. However, such migrations may prove to be a drain of the qualified personnel in the countries of origin. Thus their home country suffers a loss. On the other hand, the destination country is the gainer. The Gulf countries need qualified personnel, without spending money on their education and improvement of skills. It has been observed that the qualified/skilled personnel migrate on a contractual basis.

Primitive or Early Migration

Distinction has often been made between *Early/Primitive migration* and *forced/impelled migration*. Early migrations, particularly in the prehistoric and early historic times, were a sort of random movement and not a planned migration. People were moving out as a result of a kind of human wandering lust. But they were responsible for the peopling of the continents all over the world. These movements have also contributed to the process of inter-mixing of civilisations and cultures.

Forced or Impelled Migration

When individuals or groups decide to leave their home country in order to avoid devastation caused by drought, famine, epidemics, war, civil strife, or terrorising dictatorial regimes, it is called *forced migration*. A recent example of forced migration is the exodus of Afghans from Afghanistan to neighbouring Pakistan, Iran and India during the US-UK military operations including carpet-bombing in Afghanistan. Similarly, people migrated in large numbers to avoid persecution by the Nazi regime in Germany under Hitler before the Second World War. A comparable example of the forced migration is of the Irish people who fled away from Ireland to avoid starvation and death caused by the famine conditions during 1856-85. These migrations are described as forced because there is no choice before the migrants but to run away. When a state/country forces a section of its population to move out of the country, as they are not desirable, we call it *forced or impelled migration*.

In certain situations migration can be massive just as the migration of millions of people from India to Pakistan and from Pakistan to India immediately after independence in 1947. There are other examples of forced migration, such as deportation of criminals, political dissidents, and religious minorities. During the days of slave trade about twenty million black Africans were taken to America forcefully to work as labourers on the plantation estates in the United States of America (USA). It is estimated that about eight million people of European origin were pushed out of Europe under the forced labour policy of the Nazi regime before and during the Second World War.

Refugee Movements

What happened in history is not always old. In the world of today people are found leaving their homes and hearths, fleeing from one country to the other to avoid persecution and imminent death. They often take refuge in the neighbouring countries. In fact, refugee movements are so common these days that the United Nations (UN) has created a special fund for the rehabilitation of the refugees. These refugees are homeless and jobless. They

have lost all means of livelihood, which sustained them before migration. The UN Commission on Refugees helps them monetarily and pleads with the governments of receiving countries to find a place for them. Unfortunately, they are rehabilitated in impromptu shelters/camps. The so-called Bihari Muslims who migrated to East Pakistan immediately after the partition of British India in 1947 are still living in camps, even though fifty-seven years have passed.

Seasonal and Periodic Migration

Migrations are sometimes *seasonal* or *periodic*. This type of migration is very common among the nomadic people living on the margins of the deserts or semi-arid zones of the world. Trewartha noted ‘that some one million migrants, along with their families, make the annual pilgrimage northwards across state lines as the harvest of various crops reached the peak’. They have their origin in the southern states of the USA, such as, New Mexico, Texas, Alabama, and Georgia. A study of this migrant labour-force shows that they are mostly young people, usually less than 25 years of age, 70 per cent of them are males, and 80 per cent are Whites. The return journey is completed in the autumn when harvesting activity comes to an end. However, things have changed now and this type of migration is on the decline due to mechanisation of agriculture. There is a difference between this type of migration and the temporary traveller. The short duration movement of population is also a type of seasonal migration. There is also a diurnal movement of workers. This type of movement takes place when people move from their places of residence to their places of work. As stated earlier, this type of movement is called commutation.

Thus migrations may be periodic, annual, or diurnal. Trewartha also refers to periodic movements, which are related to vacations, fun making or business. But such trips are specifically a characteristic feature of the affluent sections of population only. The poor cannot afford such movements. In India periodic movements of millions of people are a common phenomenon. These travels are related to pilgrimage to sacred places, large fairs, such as *Kumbh Mela* and *Pushkar Mela*. Millions of people in India go on pilgrimage for a holy dip in the rivers and lakes to perform religious rites.

Another type of periodic migration is the movement of an individual from his original place of residence for a period of few years. He visits his home periodically. The main aim of this type of migration is to earn more and to send remittances to the family in the native place to establish themselves after they return to their original homes. There are millions of migrant labourers in Africa who migrate periodically. W.B. Fisher noted that ‘periodic migrations are sometimes tempted to settle permanently in their place of work. However, initially their intentions were to remain there only temporarily’ (Trewartha, 1969, p. 144).

Reflection and Action

If you live in a city you will find that a lot of people from all walks of life have migrated from different parts of the country.

Find out from your neighbourhood who has migrated from where and for what purposes. Also, classify them in to different types of migration patterns.

26.5 MIGRATION STREAMS

While dealing with internal migration demographers and population scientists enerally recognise four streams. The criterion is the direction of movement of population from the places of origin to the places of destination. The migration within the bounds of the same country generates four main streams as given below:

- a. rural-rural migration stream;
- b. rural-urban migration stream;
- c. urban-urban migration stream; and
- d. urban-rural migration stream.

Rural-Rural Migration Stream

In villages where economy is based on agriculture, people migrate from one village to another either for harvesting or sowing the crops or both. This is rural to rural migration. The problem is that the native village does not have a scope for work on agricultural farms. In other words, the supply of labour is more than the demand. The assumption is that the native village is over-crowded and agriculturally less productive as compared to the village of destination. In this form of migration, the migrants are mostly males. Sometimes, women also migrate along with the male members of the family. In countries like India, young women are married to a person living at a certain distance from their parental village. The reason is that the marriages cannot be contracted within a radius of 4-5 miles (6-8 kms.) This no-marriage field is treated as the taboo zone. However, this practice is a feature of North India only. There is no such practice in the south, where the girls are generally married to their paternal or maternal cousins. Thus a substantive proportion of the movement of women in North India is related to the marriage customs.

Women are often ignored in the migration studies. They are considered to be following their male counterparts in their capacity as mothers, daughters, sisters, and wives. But in recent years a change has been observed regarding the established myth about female migration. Now women move from one place to the other to seek higher education or in search of new economic opportunities. This reveals a favourable change in the pattern of female migration towards urban as well as long-distance destinations (Bhattacharya, 2003, p. 85-92; Premi, 1980; Singh, Thandani et al., 1984).

Rural-Urban Migration Stream

In the less developed countries, like India, Nepal and Bangladesh, rural to urban migration is a common phenomenon. In regions where the rural population densities are very high and the pace of urban-industrial development is fast, rural-urban stream is most common. These towns/cities attract the ‘surplus labour’ from nearby or far-off villages. In rural areas the burgeoning poverty, meagre employment opportunities, low and uncertain/irregular wages, lack of education and health facilities are the main push factors. These conditions induce people to migrate to the urban places. In some cases labour moves out of the village. They have no other alternative but to move out to the urban places in search of work, which can sustain them and their families. On the other hand, the pull of the urban places induces the rural population to migrate. This process is related to the expectations of the migrant labourers for better employment opportunities, regular and fixed wages and supposedly the better quality of life. But these expectations are often proved to be dreams only. A related problem is the out-migration of the educated youth for whom employment opportunities are rarely available in the native villages/ towns. This forces them to migrate to the urban places. Such unguided migration to the city leads to the problems of housing in the towns/cities. The rural poor find a place in *bustees* and squatter colonies called slums in the city. For such migrants, habitat changes, but not the quality of life.

Box 26.1 The Plight of Rural Migrants

But a very substantial part, especially of internal migration, is distress-led, driven by the complete collapse of rural employment generation, the economic

difficulties of cultivation and also the inadequate employment opportunities in towns. This is why most migrant workers in India today are poor and with few of the resources or social networks that could smoothen what can be a traumatic and painful process. Yet public policy does little to alleviate this - in fact, most public interventions and regulations work effectively to make the process even more difficult and traumatic.

Consider the fate of a rural household in, say Mahbubnagar district of Andhra Pradesh, a place where mass migrations for work were historically common but have now reached epidemic proportions. A landless labourer who is unable to find work, either within the village or in neighbouring villages is forced to search further afield, in nearby or even distant towns, in other agricultural areas with different crop seasons. If he or she is relatively lucky, there will be a link with a contractor who will arrange for group transport to the place of work. It may be gang work in a field for some activities such as harvesting, or work on a construction site, or some such work that requires a group of labourers for a certain fixed period. Of course, the journey will be arduous, the work will be demanding, the living conditions will probably be very meagre (in fact, the workers are often expected to make their own makeshift dwellings) without any amenities or facilities such as food being provided. In all likelihood, the workers will be exploited by the contractor even in monetary terms so that they receive very little income as savings from this entire exercise.

What is more, there are more women undertaking this type of insecure movement, with often dire consequences. Clearly, this kind of migration is fraught with hazards especially for women, who thereby expose themselves to the possibility of sexual exploitation and violence, in addition to other problems. There are many cases of women and even young girls being physically violated as they try to sleep in bus stands and similar places. Many of these go unreported, as the local police often do not bother too much to register alleged incidents in which the victims are poor people from other areas.

As migrants, these workers then do not have access to any of the public facilities for health care, since they are not resident in that area. They cannot buy their food requirements from the ration shops since they do not have ration cards valid for that place. If they have come with small children, they are unable to place them in local government schools, or even to access the local *anganwadi* for their legally recognised requirements. They are ignored by public schemes and programmes, including those related to such public health issues as immunisation drives.

And then there are the other sins of public omission and commission that directly affect such migrants. There are no public help centres, no information offices, no complaint cells where they can go to redress any grievances, whether these relate to non-payment of wages or terrible conditions of work or physical exploitation and violence. Rather, local officialdom in the destination typically views migrants as vagrants or nuisances, takes aggressive attitudes towards them and becomes another source of tribulation for the migrants.

Distress economic migration, of relatively short-term nature, is now a basic feature of social life in India. It contributes to macroeconomic stability even while imposing tremendous costs on those forced to undertake it. It is time for policymakers and the public became more sensitive to its manifold implications, and took whatever measures are necessary to ensure that something driven by distress did not create further trauma.

(Source: Jayati Ghosh, Frontline, volume 22 - Issue 10, May 07 - 20, 2005)

Urban-Urban Migration Stream

Urban to urban migration is a common phenomenon both in the highly urbanised

parts of the world as well as in the less developed countries. People move out from one urban place to the other. The motive is to find jobs to improve their economic status. It is a common feature that large cities attract people from small towns in their neighbourhood. This is especially true in the case of skilled workers. This practice is known as *step-wise* migration. The first step is to move out from a village to a small town; the second step is to move out from a small town to a large city. Urban to urban migration is due to multiple factors, economic as well as socio-cultural. It is the main channel of labour supply to the fast growing city.

Urban-Rural Migration Stream

Urban to rural migration is a kind of reverse flow. This is so because large metropolises/mega cities in developed countries attain a high degree of urbanisation, which widens the scope for absorption of rural labour in the informal sector of economy. This also leads to the problems of housing due to over-congestion of cities and the resultant problems of environmental pollution and poor health. This often forces the migrants to return to their native villages. It may be noted that the rural areas in the developing countries are generally underdeveloped. They lack infrastructure facilities to accommodate the rural poor. The story of developed countries is entirely different. Their cities have a developed network of transportation which functions efficiently. The people travel daily between the place of residence and the place of work without much difficulty. In India many of the retired persons tend to settle in their native villages or small towns where they own property or acquire it later.

It may be noted that the urban to rural stream is not very common. This generally happens when people run away from a metropolitan city, such as Kolkata or Mumbai, due to social insecurity or expulsion by hostile regimes.

26.6 FACTORS OF MIGRATION

There is a set of factors which cause migration. These factors are primarily economic, such as high income, better employment opportunities, and jobs in the informal sector, and the hope for a better quality of life. Marriages, social insecurity, civil strife and inter-ethnic conflicts are important social factors, which influence the decision to migrate. These factors drive people out of their countryside homes. The factors leading to migration vary from area to area and perhaps from person to person. As indicated above the push and the pull factors work together generating the streams of migration. The push factors operate to force the people to move out, while the pull factors attract the people to move to the urban nodes. It has been noted that migration is also caused by industrialisation, technological advancement and multifarious changes in the social, economic and political spheres of life of the ordinary people. Then there are other factors, such as regional disparities in economic development, perceived employment potential in a given region and the demand for services required in the city. Extra-ordinary episodes in history, such as war and terrorism also lead to migration. Studies have shown that the process of migration is not a simple but a complex phenomenon. The factors determining migration may be classified into three broad categories: economic, social and demographic.

Economic Factors

It has been observed that economic factors play an important role in the movement of population. The volume and the direction of migration depend on the economic conditions. The availability of agricultural land and the size of landholdings may also induce migration. The depressed economic conditions of the people and their state of poverty lead to out-migration. The economic

prosperity has a high employment potential and leads to in-migration. The industrial nodes have always proved to be more effective than the rural push in the industrial and agricultural countries. In developing countries, like India, agricultural development is progressing fast. These factors induce people to migrate to the agriculturally developed areas where adoption of extensive irrigation programmes, high yielding varieties of seeds and mechanical devices have brought about a green revolution. The green revolution areas in Punjab and Haryana have a high demand for labour. This labour is available in the relatively underdeveloped regions of northern India, such as eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The availability of better means of transport and communication also encourage people to migrate.

Social Factors

Like economic factors, social factors also play a significant role in inducing migration. For example, women move out from their parental home to the place of residence of their spouses after marriage. This is due to the Indian traditions and values prevailing in the country. This type of migration has nothing to do with economic gains. Chandna suggested that religious freedom might also be a significant factor influencing the migration process. Other factors also operate, such as socio-economic status, information network, cultural contacts, desire of social uplift. The socio-economic potential has been considered as an important factor to determine the magnitude and direction of migration. In India people in a low socio-economic stratum are more mobile as they have no landed property to bind them to their native places. There is overwhelming evidence to show that the better educated, more skilled and economically better-off people have a tendency to migrate. The labour market for higher status jobs is universal. This does not mean that all high status groups would migrate. For example, doctors, engineers, lawyers, architects and teachers who have already established do not move easily. Similarly, the communities, who have strong communal ties with the family, follow ancient tradition and customs do not move easily. In the world today information network (INTERNET), e-mail and cultural contacts widen the scope of having employment opportunities. Sometimes, official policies also help the aspirants to migrate in a specific direction (Chandna, 1998, p. 92-97).

Demographic Factors

There are a number of demographic factors, which induce a person to migrate. For example, age of the migrant is an important demographic factor. Young people have a far greater desire to out-migrate than the elderly people. Likewise, regional disparities in economic development also play an important role. In fact, a high rate of natural increase of population provides the basis for out-migration. It has been suggested that the growth rate of population, among other things, determines the extent of population pressure in a given geographical area. The movement of European population across the Atlantic is an example of the gap in the potential for economic development acting as an important factor of migration. In contemporary India, redistribution of population is partly related to disparities in regional development. As noted earlier, large-scale out-migration from the thickly populated parts of Bihar and east Uttar Pradesh is largely due to the diminishing land resources in the native villages.

It may, however, be noted that factors affecting the migration process are many and it is not easy to establish a cause-and-effect relationship. Recent research has highlighted the role of multifarious factors at the macro level. The micro level studies may reveal a more comprehensive picture of the causes of migration.

Migratory Selection

The concept of *migratory selection* implies that some groups in a particular age and profession are likely to be more in favour of migration than others. 'In order to deal effectively with the causes, type and consequences of migration, it must first be pointed out why the migration process is a selective one. Some elements of population tend to be more migratory than others. This is termed as migratory selection. Age is one such factor, which influences the migratory selection. In fact, the young adults and late adolescents are likely to migrate more rather than elderly people'. 'Of the millions of immigrants entering United States during the nineteenth century, two-thirds to three-fourths were between 15-40 years of age'. 'Besides age, sex is also an important element of migratory selection. Although there are no universal laws, the out-migration is predominantly of males. The region of departure becomes more strongly female, while the region of entry is characterised by an unduly large proportion of males' (Trewartha, 1969, p. 137; see also Box 4).

It may be concluded that some occupational groups are more likely to migrate than others. This is an apt example of migratory selection. 'Ordinarily selection seems to depend more upon conditions at the place of destination than upon those at the place of departure' (Trewartha, 1969, p. 138-39).

Reflection and Action 26.2

1. What do you think is the main stream of migration pattern in India?
2. Do you think the state should have policy on migration, such that it alleviates the plight of migrants?
3. In what is internal migration in India different from international or external migration?

26.7 IMPACT OF MIGRATION

Migration is not a simple phenomenon. It brings about changes in the population composition in the home villages as well as in the regions of destination. It is generally known that migration of population has backward as well as forward linkages. In fact, it is a strong catalytic agent. It helps the migrants and their families to achieve a certain level of self-sufficiency and a better quality of life in the regions/countries of destination. In fact, depending on the volume of migration the composition of population changes both at home and abroad. More importantly, the demographic scene changes drastically leading to the synthesis of culture, language, quality of life, and the influx of knowledge. The immigrants adapt themselves to the conditions prevailing in the countries of destination. Migration brings about a cultural change and its ramifications are too many. Even the place names are carried to the regions of destination. For example, New London, New York (both in USA), New South Wales (Australia), New Plymouth (New Zealand), New Castle (Australia) are all examples of the human desire to preserve their memories of the places they have left behind. The Muslims who migrated to Pakistan after the partition of British India gave the names of their hometowns in India to the places of their settlement in Pakistan particularly, the Province of Sind.

It has been suggested that the regions of destination generally benefit, while the regions of origin suffer. When the educationally qualified personnel move out their migration is often referred to as 'brain drain'. This kind of migration is likely to play a major role in terms of economic development of the countries of destination. However, the regions of origin also benefit from the remittances of money by the migrants. For example, Turkish labour in Germany and the Philippino maids in Singapore have played a vital role in the economic development of the chronically labour-deficit regions. There are other dimensions of change. The movement of the qualified labour, such as scientists, medical doctors, engineers, particularly software engineers plays a significant

role in the reduction of unemployment at home and generating income through their services in the regions of destination. India has suffered a lot due to the on-going out-migration of the highly qualified personnel to other parts of the world, such as West Asia, particularly the Gulf region. The people move out because they are enamoured by the shining Euro-Dollar. They are obviously unhappy with their economic conditions in the home country. On reaching there they register changes in their family. Inter-ethnic marriages often take place in the countries of destination. A new class of NRI's (non-resident Indians) has emerged. They not only remit money back home but also bring new cultural influences with them. Ideologies change and the process of globalisation becomes a normal channel for the diffusion and synthesis of cultures and innovations.

Sometimes, the population movement is quantitatively strong. In this case the change is all embracing. For example, Muslims of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh migrated to the Sind Province of Western Pakistan after the Partition. The immigrants and their settlements in Karachi, Hyderabad and the neighbouring small towns became a threat to the *in situ* Sindhis. Soon the immigrants became a source of tension leading to inter-ethnic clashes and civil strife.

26.8 MIGRATION TRENDS

International Migration

The term international migration refers to the change of usual residence between one nation and the other. The overwhelming majority of such movers across the frontiers do not necessarily mean that they have decided to change their usual residence. Both international and internal migration involves a change of usual residence. Another interesting feature is that the recorded volume of international migration is much less than the undocumented/ unauthorised migration. This is because people cross the international boundaries in a clandestine way. Whatever the case may be, the net international immigration has always been an important component of the population change in the country of entry. It may be noted that as a result of emigration significant change in population composition is registered in the countries of departure. A policy statement of the United Nations suggests that international movements within an intended stay of more than one year be classified as international migration. Unfortunately, there is no uniformity among the nations on the definition of international migration. Many governments, including the government of the United States of America, collect data on immigration but not on emigration. All data on immigration published by governments refer to legal immigration only while data on illegal or undocumented immigration is not tabulated (Bergatta, 1992, p. 986-87). This gap in information is a serious drawback in any study of international migration.

Trends of Migration in India

Trends of migration in India can be classified into two categories: intrastate migrations and interstate migrations. A few examples may be cited to show that the terminology used here may be confusing. When a family migrates from the Agra district of Uttar Pradesh to the neighbouring district of Bharatpur in Rajasthan, one has to describe it as interstate migration, even though distance covered is short. On the other hand, if a family or a single individual moves from Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh to Adilabad or Guntur in the same state, migration will be described as intrastate, although a long distance has been covered. It may, therefore, be concluded that distance is not a definitive criterion.

Intrastate Migration

Studies show that migrants in India do not generally cover long distances. They generally move within the state of their birth/origin. This type of migration is called intrastate. Estimates on the basis of census records show that people mostly move from one village to the other in the same state. There are about 200 million people who are normally on the move within the state. Within this group are included those who move from one village to the other. This category accounts for about 70 per cent of all migrants. On the other hand, only 9 per cent migrants move from small towns to cities. About 15 per cent of the intrastate migrants move from rural to urban areas, while 6 per cent move in the reverse direction, i.e., from urban to rural areas.

An interesting feature is that about 75 per cent of the total intrastate migrants are females. This shows that the bulk of the female migration in India is related to marriage. About 7 per cent of female migrants move from one urban centre to the other; about 12 per cent move from rural to urban areas.

Among the migrants, around 50 million consist of males. They move mainly in the rural to rural stream. This stream accounts for about one-sixth of the urban to urban category. About one-fourth is in the rural to urban and 8 per cent in the urban to rural stream.

Interstate Migration

Census data on migration show that interstate movement is much less in India as compared to the intrastate migration. In all about 27 million migrants cross the state boundaries. Of these, a little less than one-third belong to the rural to rural stream; another one-third belong to the urban to urban stream and another one-third move from the rural to urban areas. Those who move from urban to rural areas account for 7 per cent of all migrants. Data also show that in the category of interstate migrants, some 15 million women are also included. About two-fifths of them move within the rural areas; about one-third are in the urban circuit, i.e., they move from one urban centre to the other; about one-fourth of this category move from urban places to villages.

26.9 CONCLUSIONS

We have looked at various aspects of migration in India, we have tried to understand what is meant by migration and also looked at some observations made by sociologists and demographers to understand migration. We examined the various streams of migration, the trends and the factors, which go in to various kinds of migration. In the present global age migration is ever on the increase, especially transnational migration and this is altering the very nature of societies both in countries of origin and countries where people migrate to, making migration an important process that needs to be fully grasped and analysed.

26.10 FURTHER READING

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UNIT 27

Industrialisation

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Learning Objectives



27.1 Introduction

In May 1851 queen Victoria opened the Great Exhibition, which was built from prefabricated iron and glass-called the crystal palace. The exhibition showcased Britain's achievements and industrial power. At that time, Britain was producing half its iron and coal and cotton. By late 19th century 75% of its population lived in fast emerging urban areas more than 80% of its population engaged in non agricultural activity. In 1900 other countries emerged as powerful industrial countries -USA , Germany and many more followed the path of industrialisation. You, of course, have an idea of what industrialization means and how powerful the industrialised countries are in their material wealth and how we all strive to be like the developed industrialised countries.

Industrialisation was such a wide-ranging phenomenon, involving every aspect of the economy and society, that there will always be scope for debate about its timing and speed, causes and consequences. The roots of change ran deep into the past, but from the final quarter of the 18th century industrialisation gathered pace. At first slow and patchy, by the time Victoria came to the throne in 1837, it had left few lives and few institutions unaltered.

In this unit we will try and understand the process of industrialisation and the consequent changes in society. We will first look at the history of industrialisation in Industrial Revolution in England. Following this, we will examine the changes in society as a consequence of this far reaching revolution in technologies and production process. We will also try to understand this process through the eyes of different scholars who have analysed this process. We will then see what industrialisation means for India and its implication for larger society. But first of all let's look at the term and understand the characteristic features of industrialisation.

27.2 Understanding Industrialisation

Industrialisation refers to a process of change in the technology used to produce goods and services. This basic economic process has also become the prime mover for cataclysmic changes in polity and society. This social and economic change is closely intertwined with technological innovation, particularly the development of large-scale energy production and metallurgy. Industrialisation is also related to some form of philosophical change, or to a different attitude in the perception of nature, though whether these philosophical changes are caused by industrialization or vice-versa is subject to debate. To understand why a change of technology should produce such far-reaching changes in society, it is essential to consider the essential features of the industrial form of production.

The three important features of industrialisation can be put as:

Factories: The Hallmark of industrial civilization is the large factory, which brings vast number of workers together under one roof and puts them to work on machines operated by inanimate sources of energy such as steam, gas or electricity. Industrial firm introduces a new form of division of labour- a technological division of labour within the firm. Large scale factory production requires the investment of vast sums of money as fixed capital in the form of machinery and equipment. This calls for a class of entrepreneurs who can raise the necessary capital and undertake the risk involved in operating the enterprise successfully. It also has the effect of separating the workers from ownership of his /her tools. He/she becomes a wage labourer hired to work on means of production which are not his/her property. Mass production techniques typically leads to fragmentation of jobs into simple , monotonous and repetitive

skills. The large-scale industry has to be organized bureaucratically production has to be addressed to a large and impersonal market. This sets the process of monetization and commercialization going in the society. In turn impersonal market forces such as changing tastes and preference and fluctuations in demand being exact considerable influence on the production Process.

Urbanisation: the changes in the technologies of production led to social changes which were far reaching , as we mentioned earlier the very nature of production and labour relations changed from small crafts which are either family owned or guild owned to production processes concentrating in factories which were owned by the enterprising class of people. The mass production of factories created demand for labour which was location centers, so where ever factories were set up in the early days of industrialization centers of production grow which were distinctly different from traditional agricultural based production, People migrated to cities in large numbers and many urban centres grew as a result. In the 18th and 19th centuries, in England especially, such innovations as crop rotation , selective breeding of animals, and new tools in agriculture led to dramatic improvement in productivity. This meant a larger agricultural surplus was produced which meant urban populations could be supported.

Urbanisation is an important feature of all industrialised countries, the more industrial a country is more concentration there is of people in urban centres,

27.3 Historical Background of Industrialisation Process

In the 18th century a series of changes in society brought about a gradual change in the production process, powered machines were increasingly used in the production process, these series of changes were most accelerated in 18th century England and the changes were to have dramatic and far reaching influence not only for England but for Europe and for the rest of the globe. I am sure you have heard about Industrial revolution when you read history in school and elsewhere. Let us recapitulate what Industrial revolution meant and how it spawned a series of change in society, leading to industrialization.

Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution may be defined as the application of power-driven machinery to manufacturing. It had its beginning in remote times, and is still continuing in some places. In the eighteenth century all of western Europe began to industrialize rapidly, but in England the process was most highly accelerated. England's head start may be attributed to the emergence of a number of simultaneous factors. England had large supply of fuel and raw material that it would get from its colonies abroad. There were abundant labour supply to mine coal and iron. The merchants of tea and tobacco had money to invest in technical and scientific innovation, to add on to scientific revolutions that were already taking place.

Agricultural Innovations: England between 1760 and 1830 was also experiencing innovative changes in agricultural techniques. As we already mentioned there was crop rotation, which did not allow the land to lie fallow, follow each planting. The open field system gave way to enclosed compact farming. Jethro Tull introduced horse hoe and seed drill and Bakewell pioneered stock breeding. Bakewell showed how to breed for food quality. Bakewell selected his animals, inbred them, kept elaborate genealogical records, and maintained his stock carefully. He was especially successful with sheep, and before the century's end his principle of inbreeding was well established.

Technological Changes: The technological changes of the eighteenth century did not appear suddenly. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the

methods of making glass, clocks, and chemicals advanced markedly. By 1700 in England, and by 1750 in France, the tendency of the state and the guilds to resist industrialization was weakening. In fact, popular interest in industrialization resembled the wave of enthusiasm elicited by experimental agriculture.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century in England, the use of machines in manufacturing was already widespread. In 1762, Matthew Boulton built a factory which employed more than six hundred workers, and installed a steam engine to supplement power from two large waterwheels which ran a variety of lathes and polishing and grinding machines. In 1733 John Kay patented his flying shuttle and about the same time James Hargreaves came up with spinning jenny, where one operator could spin many threads. In 1779, Samuel Crompton invented a machine known as "crompton mule" which produced fine strong yarn. By 1812 the cost of making cotton yarn had dropped nine-tenths, and by 1800 the number of workers needed to turn wool into yarn had been reduced by four-fifths. And by 1840 the labor cost of making the best woolen cloth had fallen by at least half.

Advances in Transportation: Steam Engine developed by James Watt in 1773 was landmark of industrialisation. Other innovations and discoveries, which propelled industrialisation include the production of electricity the railroads. By 1936, England had built electric grid completely covering the entire country. Electricity was one of the chief factors which led to rapid industrialisation in Russia in 1930's. The railroads were another feature of rising industrial states in 19th 20th century. British success with steam locomotion, however, was enough to encourage the building of railroads in most European countries, often with British capital, equipment, and technicians. Railroads became a standard item of British export. After 1842 France began a railroad system which combined private and public enterprise. The government provided the roadbed and then leased it to a private company, which provided the equipment. In Russia, Canada, and the United States, railways served to link communities separated by vast distances. In Germany there were no vast empty spaces, but railroads did help to affect political and economic integration. The internal combustion engine used in motorcars completely revolutionized social patterns of mid 20th century. America took to motorcars in a great way. The growth of the automobile industry created large fields for investment, produced new types of service occupations, and revolutionized road-making. This was true in western Europe as well as in America after the Second World War.

The First World War saw the beginning of commercial aviation. Germany's geographical position and the ban on military aircraft imposed by the peace treaty led to the development of civilian airlines. By 1929 commercial planes were flying out of the European capitals to all important places on the globe. And the day was not far off when airplanes were to eclipse railroad trains as commercial passenger carriers

Communications: In 1876, transmitted human voice over the phone revolutionizing communication. "Although it was several decades before the telephone became popular. At the end of the century the wireless telegraph became a standard safety device on oceangoing vessels. Radio did not come until 1920; then it was commercially exploited in America to a much greater extent than in Europe. In Europe the broadcasting systems were either operated or closely controlled by the state and did not carry commercial advertising. The penny post on all letters was inaugurated in Britain in 1840 after it was discovered that handling, not the distance sent, was the critical cost in delivering mail. All letters weighing a half-ounce or less could be carried for an English penny (two cents). By 1875 the Universal Postal Union had been established to facilitate the transmission of mail between foreign countries.

In 1871 telegraph cables reached from London to Australia; messages could be flashed halfway around the globe in a matter of minutes, speeding commercial transactions. The world continued to shrink at a great rate as new means of transport and communication speeded the pace of life.” (source:<http://mars.acnet.wnec.edu/~grempel/courses/wc2/lectures/industrialrev>)

Changing Social patterns: Industrial revolution with its attendant revolutions in the field of agriculture , transportation and communication brought in tremendous changes in the society. The consequences of this revolution would change irrevocably human labor, consumption, family structure, social structure, and even the very soul and thoughts of the individual. As we mentioned earlier, the production process itself changed substantially. Production at specified sites known as factories, which used machines changed the tradition production and manufacture process, which was largely family based and guild based. Earlier families owned their tools and procured the raw material themselves. Many such families moved to cities both in search of work because they were disposed of earlier land because of new acts which permitted lands that had been held in common by tenant farmers to be enclosed into large, private farms worked by a much smaller labor force. While this drove peasants off the land, it also increased agricultural production *and* increased the urban population of England, since the only place displaced peasants had to go were the cities. The English Parliament, unlike the monarchies of Europe, was firmly under the control of the merchant and capitalist classes, so the eighteenth century saw a veritable army of legislation that favored mercantile and capitalist interests. One of the major offshoots of industrial revolution is the emergence of new bourgeoisie class and the working class. The new class of industrial workers included all the men, women, and children laboring in the textile mills, pottery works, and mines. Often skilled artisans found themselves degraded to routine process laborers as machines began to mass produce the products formerly made by hand. Generally speaking, wages were low, hours were long, and working conditions unpleasant and dangerous. The industrial workers had helped to pass the Reform Bill of 1832.

Box. 27.1: Engels on the *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*

Fredrick Engels was often overshadowed by his co-author, Karl marx but he was one of the first to experience the conditions of working class and founding father's of a socialist philosophy. Engels worked as an agent in his father's Manchester cotton factory . He wrote about the working conditions of the working class with a strong sense of social consciousness. Here is an extract from his book *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*

“Here one is in an almost undisguised working-men’s quarter, for even the shops and beer houses hardly take the trouble to exhibit a trifling degree of cleanliness. But all this is nothing in comparison with the courts and lanes which lie behind, to which access can be gained only through covered passages, in which no two human beings can pass at the same time. Of the irregular cramming together of dwellings in ways which defy all rational plan, of the tangle in which they are crowded literally one upon the other, it is impossible to convey an idea. And it is not the buildings surviving from the old times of Manchester which are to blame for this; the confusion has only recently reached its height when every scrap of space left by the old way of building has been filled up and patched over until not a foot of land is left to be further occupied.... Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. And such a district exists in the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world. If any one wishes to see in how little space a human being can move, how little air - and *such* air! - he can breathe, how little of civilisation he may share and yet live,

it is only necessary to travel hither. True, this is the *Old Town*, and the people of Manchester emphasise the fact whenever any one mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth; but what does that prove? Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*”(Engels, 1892:48-53)

Another consequence was the growth of cities and urban centers which became trading centers as well as new political centers. Until the Industrial Revolution, most of the world's population was rural. However, by mid-nineteenth century, half of the English people lived in cities, and by the end of the century, the same was true of other European countries. Between 1800 and 1950 most large European cities exhibited spectacular growth. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were scarcely two dozen cities in Europe with a population of 100,000, but by 1900 there were more than 150 cities of this size.

By mid 20th century not only Western Europe but many other countries were fast industrialising. Replacing old feudal institutions with new ones whether it was in the economy, social life or politics. These tremendous changes were felt all over Europe and scholars tried to capture these changes and analyse them. In the following section we will look at some major thinkers and their views on Industrialisation and industrial capitalist society.

27.4 Social Thinkers on Industrial Society

Many social thinkers of late 19th century and early 20th century were seized with changes that were brought about by industrialisation and the characters that were part of these emerging societies. Thus, we find many early sociologists invariably contrasted earlier, pre-industrial societies with industrial societies resulting in classification and typologies of society, for instance Tönnies 'Gemeinschaft' and 'Gesellschaft', Durkheim's contrast of 'organic solidarity' and 'mechanical solidarity', Maine's 'status' and 'contract' and Spencer's 'militant' and 'industrial society'. Or Marx's more elaborate classification societies which was based on mode of production which included stages such as 'primitive communism', 'ancient', 'feudal' and 'capitalist'.

These theories and typologies tended to be evolutionary in their approach, as inevitable historical process was visualised. They all tried to look for fundamental organizing principles behind industrial societies which was then contrasted with non-industrial or pre-industrial society. For St. Simone (and Comte who followed him) industrial society was to be contrasted to military society. The latter was organized around plunder, waste, display, the former was organized around the orderly output of goods. For St. Simone there were four dimensions to an industrial society :

- a) It was concerned with production

- b) Its methods were those of order, certainty and precision,
- c) It would be organized by "New Men" Engineers, Industrialists, Planners,
- d) It would be based on knowledge. For Tönnies it was impersonal relationships based on contract which characterized modern industrial society rather than the face-to-face interactions in smaller societies. Durkheim in a similar vein was looking at not only the basic principles of division of labour but he looks at various institutions which are held together by such elements as mechanical and organic solidarity. Let us examine some of these writings on industrial societies in detail, we will look at the writings of Marx, Weber and Durkheim as they are the most foundational of all thinkers in their analyses of industrial societies.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Marx's theory is very elaborate and covers not only the contemporary situation of his time but attempts to reconstruct the political economy of human history. In his analysis, the present industrial economy is a capitalist mode of production.

It was Friedrich Engels who kindled Marx's interest in the working class situation; he deepens this interest with his philosophy of historical materialism.

According to Marx, what distinguishes capitalist mode of production from the previous feudal mode of production is that labour becomes a commodity. "When peasants became free to sell their own labor-power, and needed to do so because they no longer possessed their own land or tools necessary to produce. People sell their labor-power when they accept compensation in return for whatever work they do in a given period of time (in other words, they are not selling the product of their labor, but their capacity to work). In return for selling their labor power, they receive money, which allows them to survive. Those who must sell their labor power to live are "proletarians." The person who buys the labor power, generally someone who does own the land and technology to produce, is a "capitalist" or "bourgeois." Capitalists take advantage of the difference between the labor market and the market for whatever commodity is produced by the capitalist. Marx observed that in practically every successful industry input unit-costs are lower than output unit-prices. Marx called the difference "surplus value" and argued that this surplus value had its source in surplus labour. Marx believed that surplus value appropriated from labor is the source of profits. (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karl_Marx).

In essence, the working class is exploited for its labour, the wages they earn are enough to keep them at subsistence level. Because wage -worker sells their labour power to earn a living, and the capitalist owns the labour process, the product of the workers' labour is alien to the waged worker. It is not his or her product but the product of the capitalist. Marx calls this separation of labour process from oneself as alienation.

Alienation, Marx says is a feature of the industrial capitalist society where labour is not only a commodity but the process of production and the product which the worker has produced is estranged. The worker has no control over what she/he produces. Marx pointed out, workers are alienated in several distinct ways: from their products as externalised objects, existing independently of their makers; from the natural world out of which the raw material of these products has been appropriated; from their own labor, which becomes a grudging necessity instead of a worthwhile activity; and from each other as the consumers of the composite products. These dire conditions, according to Marx, are the invariable consequences of industrial society.

Marx's did not visualize this dehumanised existence of the worker in an industrial capitalist system to be inescapable. He, along with Engels came with revolutionary way out , they not only developed a critique of the conditions but a political action in *Communist Manifesto* (1848). Marx envisioned that workers who were exploited soon would rally together to overthrow the capitalists. And that increasing class antagonism would result in revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist and means of production would be wrested from them.

Marx is one of the most influential and inspiring thinkers of our times. His prescription for a world free of conflict was attempted, in a reformulated way, by Soviet Russia and other communist countries. The collapse of such economies has made Marxist more virulent. Even before that his critics have pointed out "that the increasing class antagonisms he predicted never actually developed in the Western world following industrialization. While socioeconomic gaps between the bourgeoisie and proletariat remained, industrialization in countries such as the United States and Great Britain also saw the rise of a middle class not inclined to violent revolution, and of a welfare state that helped contain any revolutionary tendencies among the working class. While the economic devastation of the Great Depression broadened the appeal of Marxism in the developed world, future government safeguards and economic

recovery led to a decline in its influence”(Ibid).Despite this criticisms Marx’s basic propositions continue to inspire not only as a critique in academic circles but as an inspiration for all kinds of movements. And his views on industrialization and capitalism still hold sway. Let us now turn our attention to Max Weber who saw rationalization principles that inform modern industrial world.

Max Weber (1863-1920)

According to many scholars, Weber’s attempt to analyse capitalism was meant to supplement Marx’s largely economics oriented perspective. According to Zeitlin, “he set himself a special task, viz., to examine the economic relevance of specific religious ethic, which he felt had not been given the consideration it deserved. Although he sometimes speaks of correlation and causal influence, he states clearly that he is deliberately treating ‘only one side of the causal chain’, i.e., the impact of religious values on economic conduct. He wanted to somehow assess the contribution of the protestant ethic in particular to the modern economic system and more generally to contribute to our knowledge of how “ideas become effective forces in history” (Zeitlin 2000:122-123).

The singular value, which defines all modern institution, according to Weber, is rationalization. This rational legal oriented value on which actions are based is different from value orientation, which is derived from traditions, whether it is in politics or economics. “Rationalization is the process whereby an increasing number of social actions and interactions become based on considerations of efficiency or calculation rather than on motivations derived from custom, tradition, or emotion. It is conceived of as a core part of modernization and as manifested especially in behavior in the capitalist market; rational administration of the state and bureaucracy; the extension of modern science; and the expansion of modern technology”(source:<http://en.wikipedia.org>) This rational value in protestant ethic , according to Weber propelled capitalist development in Occidental or western countries. He elaborates this thesis in his book *Protest Ethic and the Sprit of Capitalism*.

According to Weber the sprit of capitalism is such ideas and values which help in the pursuit of rational actions such as; rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology and rational law and rationalization of the conduct of life in general.

“In order that a manner of life well adapted to the peculiarities of the capitalism... could come to dominate others, it had to originate somewhere, and not in isolated individuals alone, but as a way of life common to the whole groups of man” (quoted in ibid). Weber believes that certain sects of Protestantism, especially Calvinism encouraged worldly activities as pursuit of spiritual ‘calling’. In Catholicism an individual was assured of salvation by following the sacraments of the church and its authority but Reformation severed this authority of the Church and therefore they had to look for alternatives of sign of salvation, according to Weber, Protestantism encouraged pursuit of any secular vocation as vocation of God, which was limited to the clergy earlier . Weber says that Protestantism ethic encouraged individuals to pursue vocations with zeal, thus work became worship. It also encouraged money to be invested in rational economic gains rather than being spent on luxuries and pursuit of happiness. This ethic, Weber believed helped the nascent capitalism. Weber cites the work of Benjamin Franklin which emphasise frugality, work and thrift.

“It should be noted that Weber maintained that while Puritan religious ideas had had a major influence on the development of economic order in Europe and United States, they were not the only factor (others included the rationalism in scientific pursuit, merging observation with mathematics, science of scholarship and jurisprudence, rational systematisation of government

administration and economic enterprise). In the end, the study of Protestant ethic, according to Weber, merely explored one phase of the emancipation from magic, that disenchantment of the world that he regarded as the distinguishing peculiarity of Western culture. The result, according to Weber, is a “polar night of icy darkness”, in which increasing rationalisation of human life traps individuals in an “iron cage” of rule-based, rational control”(ibid).

By extension therefore, Weber argues that in the Orient where rational ethic was missing in Hinduism or Confucianism the capitalist enterprise did not develop. Regarding Hinduism in India, he notes the idea of an immutable world order consisting of the eternal cycles of rebirth and the deprecation of the mundane world, and finds that the traditional caste system, supported by the religion, slowed economic development; in other words, the “spirit” of the caste system militated against an indigenous development of capitalism. He notes further, that the beliefs tended to interpret the meaning of life as otherworldly or mystical experience, that the intellectuals tended to be apolitical in their orientation, and that the social world was fundamentally divided between the educated, whose lives were oriented toward the exemplary conduct of a prophet or wise man, and the uneducated masses who remained caught in their daily rounds and believed in magic(ibid). There were lots of debates about Weber’s thesis on India. Some scholars explored his idea further in the Indian context to see if the work ethic and frugality of business communities such as the Marwaris and Jains fitted in with Weber’s thesis. Others like the historian Irfan Habib argued that India had potentials for capitalist development, which were thwarted by colonial rule and the flourishing textile industry was completely destroyed by the British. We will discuss aspects of Indian industrialisation in the following section. At this point it will be worthwhile to point out that Weber’s ideas of rationalization and disenchantment finds resonance in lot of social science thinking when visualising industrial societies, But before that let us examine Durkheim’s work and his ideas on industrial society. Durkheim is a contemporary of Weber and like him was seized with analyzing changes that were brought about by industrialisation.

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

Durkheim’s primary interest was what happens as societies begin to industrialise and modernize. When they begin to industrialize and labor becomes increasingly specialized. Durkheim calls the new form of solidarity resulting from modernization *organic solidarity*. In modern, industrial societies, labor is tremendously divided. Individuals no longer perform the same tasks, have the same interests, nor necessarily share the same perspectives on life. But Durkheim quickly points out that this does not cause a society to fail or disintegrate. Organic solidarity is formed. Like the organs within an animal, individuals perform certain specific functions, but rely on the well-being and successful performance of other individuals. If one organ fails, the rest of them fail as well. A body—or in this case a society—cannot function at all if one part crumbles. This reliance upon each other for social (and even physical) survival is the source of organic solidarity, according to Durkheim.

Durkheim discusses social solidarity—the bond between all individuals within a society—in considerable depth, especially in his first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society*, first published in 1893. He first described the social cohesion particular to pre-industrial societies. This *mechanical solidarity* as he called it, occurred when all members of a society performed the same or nearly the same tasks as all others in a society. If one person were to die and not be replaced, the society would not change, because all other members did exactly the same thing as the member that died. The collective conscience of a mechanical society is identical among all members, and the bond derives not from dependence on other individuals, but from the dependence on the total social system(source: <http://durkheim.itgo.com>). For Durkheim the world of ‘organic solidarity’ was a world of specialization, complementarities and

independence. The ruling principle is “Structural Differentiation”. In industrial society, there is a separation of the economic system from the family system, the workplace from home. With the breakup of the traditional ‘Collective Conscience’ core beliefs are to be organized around occupational codes and mediated through professional ethics.

As you must be already aware, from your various readings on Durkheim, that he saw essential harmony in the way societies functioned. Modern society writes Durkheim “will be definitely in equilibrium , only when organized on a purely industrial basis” (quoted in Zeitlin, 2000:238) This equilibrium will be achieved because of positive consequences of division of labour; “it leads to exchange of services, reciprocity of obligations, interdependence etc. Contracts and other formal legal relationships governing these exchanges lead to what he defined as organic solidarity”(ibid:244). If this division of labour did not produce a solidarity, Durkheim claims, that it is because it is an abnormal condition, a consequence of pathological form that it had momentarily assumed. Marx accentuates the conflicting nature of modern industrial society where men are alienated from one another and from themselves: a condition in which exploitation, conflict and domination were normal and unavoidable so long as the existing “relations of production” prevailed. For Durkheim on the other hand , it is only its pathological form that division of labour produces negative consequences. Durkheim calls this pathology anomie. Durkheim defined the term *anomie* as a condition where social and/or moral norms are confused, unclear, or simply not present. Durkheim felt that this lack of norms—or preaccepted limits on behavior in a society—led to deviant behavior. Industrialization in particular, according to Durkheim, tends to dissolve restraints on the passions of humans. Where traditional societies—primarily through religion—successfully taught people to control their desires and goals, modern industrial societies separate people and weaken social bonds as a result of increased complexity and the division of labor.

We have examined three of the main social thinkers who have looked at industrialisation from various perspectives. A lot of theorizing which came about subsequently on industrialisation and modernity and contemporary society have been inspired and informed by these thinkers, in one way or other.

Reflection and Action 27.1

1. Do you think that Marx’s idea of alienation is still relevant in present society?
2. Is rationalization process that Weber talks of an inevitable process of modern world? Do you find any resistances to such rationalization?
3. Do you think extreme differentiation and specialization in industrial societies leads to chaos and anomie?

27.5 Industrialisation In India

Industrialization as we know is a term that is specifically employed to indicate the use of machines in the production process. It is also generally believed that Industrial Revolution in England has propelled industrialisation not only in England but elsewhere also. This easy connection with technological innovation and revolution to industrialisation makes one ask whether similar conditions existed in India and whether industries were developing in an indigenous fashion and what role colonization had on the development of industries or de-industrialisation of already existing industries. Post Independent India saw industrial policies being shaped by not only the aspect of colonialism but it was also informed by dominant paradigms of development discourse and by contemporary politics. Let us look at colonial phase of industrialisation before we examine the industrialisation in post-independence India.

Colonisation of India and Industrilisation

Whenever there is discussion on industrilisation in India, the colonial state is brought to the centre stage. It is held by many that the empire heralded development in India, the apologist of the Empire often cite examples of British investments in infrastructure etc as laying the ground for further industrilisation. The other arguments highlights the disastrous results of colonialism on the indigenous economies, completely taking it out of competitive edge it had in textile industry. This argument was particularly favoured by the nationalist who at that time argued for increased control of governance by the natives. Dadabhai Naoroji's *Drain of Wealth* and R.C. Dutt's work of *Economic History of India* had become works that were part of the nationalist historiography. The nationalists argued that competition with cheap British mill cloth drove Indians out of the handloom industry and into agriculture.

There is another argument which does not agree with notions that India was stagnant till the British came and took over. A view shared by people like Marx as well, though he pointed out to the exploitative nature of colonialism. Against this notion of oriental stagnation were arguments from historians like Irfan Habib who says that the economy was far from stagnant. Hamza Alvi writes, quoting historical sources, that the Indian society of the 17th century, except for its military and especially naval weakness, was fully equal, in the arts of manufacture and agriculture and culture, to the Europeans at the time. Contrary to the stereotype of the medieval Indian society as a stagnant rural backwater we find evidence of a high degree of urbanisation. Habib speaks of 'multitudes of artisans, peons and servants found in the towns ... in 120 big cities and 3200 townships (in the second half of the 16th century)' He adds that 'Agra and Fatehpur Sikri (twin cities) were each held to be larger than London. Delhi was held to be as populous as Paris, then the biggest city in Europe'. (Habib, 1963: 75-76 quoted in Alvi, Source: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/sangat/Colonial.htm>) A high proportion of the Indian urban population was employed in industrial crafts. The manufacturing industry was geared not only to the luxury consumption of the aristocracy and the more modest needs of the population in general but also a rapidly growing volume of exports. Naqvi points out that since the 17th century there was a 'wide growth of cities and towns as centres of cotton manufactures'. (Naqvi, 1968:142 quoted in Ibid).

Hanza Alvi and many of the dependency theorist (see unit 9 of Course on sociology of development for a detailed discussion) argue that capitalism was a global phenomenon from the outset, not only by way of trade but also by way of extraction of resources from the colonies that underpinned capital accumulation in the metropolis like the British Empire. In other words, the resources from conies were used to fuel the mills and factories of Manchester and other places of England. What started off as unfair trade soon made way to plunder and greed. Not only did the British protect their domestic industry by imposing heavy duty of Indian textiles but once the started to rule India they collected revenues, taxes and other impositions. "Once the East India Company acquired a large local source of funds in the form of land revenue, it was no longer necessary for Britain to pay for India's textile exports in bullion and precious stones as it had so far done. It could now buy Indian textiles from the wealth that it extracted from Indians. Textiles for exports were bought from the huge amounts of land revenue that now accrued to the Company and its employees. It was now to be a one-sided flow of unrequited exports from India to Britain. It was to be spoken of by Indian nationalists as the 'Economic Drain' from India"(ibid).

In the early phase of colonialism, there was very little capital investment in India. However, to aid trade to England infrastructure like railways, telegraphs, post etc were introduced. The capital investment which followed eventually

was from English entrepreneurs and capitalist who wanted to be closer to raw material and cheap labour. They also enjoyed the patronage of the Empire. Very few Indian entrepreneurs started manufacturing business as British polices did not favour them and they were reluctant to enter in to unknown fields.

There were however several business communities who were initially the collaborators and middlemen with the British, like the Parsis and Marwaris who ventured in to setting up industries. The Marwaris of Calcutta moved from being traders to industrialist in the jute business. The transformation of a few Marwari families from 'traders to industrialists' was gradual. "This pattern can be described in the following steps: (A) They slowly increased their importance in the trade of raw jute and jute manufactures; (B) Some of the Marwari traders became members of the formal jute-trade organisations. Others became brokers to British managing agency houses, or, by buying shares got a place on the board of directors of British managing agency houses; (C) Finally, in the early 1920s, a few Marwaris entered the jute industries by setting up their own jute mills." The birlas started their first jut emill in 1919, whereas Goenka and Bangur started theirs after World War II (Oonk, 2004:4) The Parsis on the other hand did not face stiff opposition from the British like the Marwaris. They were the collaborators of the British and sympathized with them. "They partly financed the military defence of the Bombay fort; they were loyal to the British during the Mutiny (1857), financing the British military apparatus. Third, a part of the Parsee community was fast to recognise that is was very useful to learn English, to adopt British customs and to intensify their relation with the British in order to improve the socio-economic position of the community in West India. The Parsis were among the first to build up the Indian cotton textile industry in Bombay. Parsis owned nine of ten mills built in Bombay between 1854 and 1863. This included two mills of the Petit family. In the period between 1878 and 1915, the Parsis owned between 41 and 30 per cent of the mills in the city. " (ibid:9).Apart from this communities the bankers of Ahmedabad without any British intervention or association started setting up mills.

After this initial forays many trading families started to invest in industrial enterprise. This challenged the monopoly of British capitalist, the government started adopting discriminatory policies towards them. The tariff, taxation and transport policies were made favourable to the British capitalist. Thus there was stiff competition in the marketing of goods as well. The Indian capitalist organized themselves in to Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

The capitalists were aware that they would be better off in a free India and were active supporters of nationalist struggles. The leadership of the national movement were also aware of the need for industrialization of the country.

Industrilisation in Post-independent India

The colonial past very much played a part in the economic path India took, especially under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru the new Prime minister of India. The link between colonialism and underdevelopment was firmly established . This history made Indian leaders wary of international free trade. Nehru who was inspired by Fabian socialism and by the Russian example decided to adopt a socialist pattern of economic development. Much of early economic activity in newly independent India was state induced, and state controlled. Nehru wanted to adopt Harold Laski's idea of mixed economy, which he did. The state controlled major industries and public related services.

In setting a path for the economic policy after Independence, Nehru followed a development discourse and models which were current and popular at that time. He truly believed that like Russia India needed to develop its heavy

industries which were capital intensive. Thus in the initial phase of economic development saw setting up heavy industries and the construction of dams. He chose from a set of options considerably more limited than those available today, and followed to a large degree the conventional wisdom among Indian academic economists of the time. India's growth rate in GDP stayed moderately above 4% during all the years that Nehru was Prime Minister. It is hard to say definitively how much growth there might have been with different economic policies: predominantly capitalist Western Europe grew slightly faster than India during the Nehru years (especially during the decade after World War II); but so did the command economies of communist China and the Soviet Union. The strongly capitalist USA grew somewhat more slowly, as did most of the newly independent nations that followed WWII (with the exception of oil-producing nations). The Soviet Union was the only major power during Nehru's tenure to aid India in developing independent capabilities in areas of heavy industry, engineering, and technology. This political fact, combined with Nehru's preference for state-led development, promoted suspicion about the sincerity of India's non-aligned foreign policy positions. In hindsight, the Nehruvian model failed in many of its objectives; however, many Indian economists—particularly among Nehru's contemporaries—believe Nehru's emphasis on central planning was the right policy for India of that time.

Some critics of Indian economic development believe that the economy of the Nehruvian and post-Nehruvian era, with inefficient public sector entities on the one hand, and crony-capitalist private sector entities on the other, that used the so-called license raj to carve out lucrative niches for themselves on the other, was a product of economic policy foundations laid during Nehru's tenure (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jawaharlal_Nehru).

Box 27.2: Five Year Plans

After independence, India opted to have a centrally planned economy to ensure an effective and equitable allocation of national resources for the purpose of balanced economic development. The idea of planning was taken from Russian centralized planning system. Indian Economy is based on the concept of planning. This is carried through her Five-Year Plans, developed, executed and monitored by the Planning Commission. After liberalisation, the emergence of a market economy with a fast growing private sector, planning has become indicative, rather than prescriptive in nature. The process of formulation and direction of the Five-Year Plans is carried out by the Planning Commission, headed by the Prime Minister of India as its chairperson (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_economy).

India followed policies of import substitution, industrialisation and state intervention in labour and financial markets, a large public sector, overt regulation of business, and central planning. Till 1980 this was the general tone of economy, the growth rate was steady but not substantially and it was generally referred to as the 'Hindu growth rate', because all other surrounding Asian economies, especially the 'East Asian Tigers' were growing at rapid pace.

In 1980 the first steps towards liberalization were taken up by Indira Gandhi and followed by his Rajiv Gandhi, this involved easing restrictions on capacity expansion for incumbents, removed price controls and reduced corporate taxes. The economic liberalisation of 1991, initiated by then Indian prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao and his finance minister Manmohan Singh in response to a macroeconomic crisis did away with the *License Raj* (investment, industrial and import licensing) and ended public sector monopoly in many sectors, thereby allowing automatic approval of foreign direct investment in many sectors. Since then, the overall direction of liberalisation has remained the same, irrespective of the ruling party at the centre, although no party has yet tried to take on powerful lobbies like the trade unions and farmers, or

contentious issues like labour reforms and cutting down agricultural subsidies(ibid).

In our next section we will look at two main perspectives which have dominated Indian thinking on industrilisation. These perspectives are of Mahatma Gandhi Jawaharlal Nehru's. In our course on 'Sociology of Development' we have detailed discussion on this perspective(see unit Unit 8 in MSO-003) . Here we will give you a brief introduction.

27.6 Gandhi and Nehru on Industrilisation

There many approaches, writings and opinions on the issue of development. The more dominant theories of development, which are top down and industry oriented, have been criticized and alternatives have been proposed. In the present age of increased awareness of environmental degradation caused by exploitation of earth's resources and heavy industries that have proved to be more than harmful, the consumerist-oriented approaches of development have come under severe criticism. In this context Gandhi's views on development have been especially lauded by many. Let us examine the two perspectives.

Gandhi: Swadeshi and Khadi

As we mentioned earlier, a lot of thinking on what is the best path for independent India's economy has been in some way or other informed and influenced by colonial experience.

Gandhi believed that India's progress was tied up with its villages. He was distrustful of the overarching powers of the state and conceived of a series of village republics for India. He was not for industrilisation which would destroy traditional handicrafts and artisans and industries associated with them. He strongly believed the concept of self reliance or *swadeshi*. This meant that we, as Indians should find sustenance in our efforts -labour and intellect derived from the people themselves. Khadi-the hand spun cloth symbolized to him the spirit of swdeshi. Gandhi believed that one need not take recourse to mass production for individual needs a lot of life's necessities can be met by production at village level and at individual level. He realized that the state of unemployment in villages can be improved with setting up of village industries. Though mass produced items may be cheaper , he believed if we really want the villages to prosper and the poor 's substance taken care then we are on the path to development.

Items such as the spinning wheel even more than a handloom was a symbol of self reliance of the individual and gainful labour and simplicity of living. He cautioned against the modern world's rush towards material wealth. He wondered if this could be seriously counted as human progress. He believed that material progress did not necessarily mean real progress or moral and spiritual progress. He cautioned against blindly aping the West in pursuit of wealth.

Gandhi's views are finding special resonance with people and development practitioners who are looking for alternatives to dominant paradigms of development, which have been top down approaches and which do not take in to consideration the real needs of people. The idea of decentralized, village level development that Gandhi advocated has special appeal in this context.

Nehru's Socialist Ideal of Industrilisation

We have already talked about Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of restructuring of India's economy was inspired by socialist ideals, especially the Fabian school of thinking who looked to democratic and gradual change towards socialist

society.

Box 27.3 The Fabians

The society was founded on January 4, 1884 in London, UK as an offshoot of a society founded in 1883 called The Fellowship of the New Life. The Fabian Society is a British socialist intellectual movement, whose purpose is to advance the socialist cause by social democratic, rather than revolutionary, means. It is best known for its initial ground-breaking work beginning in the late 19th century and then up to World War I. Fabian socialists were also critical of free trade and embraced protectionism in the interests of protecting the realm from foreign competition. In the period between the two World Wars, the “Second Generation” Fabians, including the writers R. H. Tawney, G. D. H. Cole and Harold Laski, continued to be a major influence on social-democratic thought. It was at this time that many of the future leaders of the Third World were exposed to Fabian thought; most notably, India’s Jawaharlal Nehru. (source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabians>)

Jawaharlal Nehru played a vital role in the formation of the Congress’ economic policy during the National Movement. Unlike Gandhi, Nehru’s approach for the Indian economy was based on a firm belief in modern western ideas of development. He was all for developing India into a modern state. He considered industrialisation as a crucial prerequisite for Indian development. He was instrumental in identifying economic goals for India in the resolution passed at the Karachi session of the Congress in 1931. The resolution, among other things, suggested state ownership of major industries, mineral resources, railways, waterways etc. He wanted the state to take major responsibility for development work; the public sector in free India was an outcome of this thinking. As we already mentioned, the planning of the economy, was inspired by the Russian system.

Nehru was opposed to landlordism and the feudal set up. One of the major steps he had taken in his tenure is to abolish the Zamindari system in free India. He was for scientific temper and a rational secular outlook and works towards trying to make a path for India in this direction.

Though there are drastic differences in the approaches of Gandhi and Nehru, it is clear that they both wanted India to come out of the legacy of colonialism towards a path of self-reliance and progress.

We have discussed a great deal on the history of industrialisation in England and in India but things have been changing since the traditional notion of factories and industries, which employed people on subsistence level wages for long hours. The production process may have remained the same to some extent, but new technologies—especially communication technologies, have dramatically altered not only economies but lifestyles and geographies of the globe in a big way. Many social thinkers have been pointing out to a post-industrial society that we live in. In our next section, let us have a brief look at what is meant by postindustrial society.

27.8 Post-Industrial Society

Daniel Bell, a professor of sociology, was the first to use the term postindustrial society. In fact, it was the title of his book *Post-Industrial Society* (1973). As far back as 1973, Bell predicted that we are fast moving towards a society where services and knowledge-related technologies would dominate rather than industrial production that was conventionally viewed. He held that post-industrial society would replace the industrial society as the dominant mode. There are three components to a post-industrial society, according to Bell:

- a shift from manufacturing to services
- the centrality of the new science-based industries

- the rise of new technical elites and the advent of a new principle of stratification

Another term used for post-industrial society is 'information age', as another characteristic feature of post-industrial societies is the domination of information technologies and industries related to it.

The crux of difference between industrial and post-industrial lies in what Daniel Bell calls the axial principle, the fundamental logic of economy and society was theoretical knowledge (axial principle in industrial society was technical knowledge) which is a strategic resource of the new society, the university, research institutions are the axial structure where this resource is located. Intellectual Technology i.e. problem solving system using electronic gadgetry which allow for rational macro planning, forecasting monitoring with every responsibility of society become important than machine technology. White collar jobs replace blue collar jobs. Within this society there is increase of professional technical and scientific groups.

Bells prediction of post-industrial society was based on already emerging patterns in America in the 1970s. and these are:

- 1) Employment figures in 1950's: US became the first country to have a majority of its working population in services i.e. trade, finance, transport, health, recreation, education, government. Within service there was a rapid growth of professional and technical carders.
- 2) Evidence showed that contribution to service sector to GNP was steadily mounting.
- 3) Increase in Financial allocation towards higher education i.e. theoretical knowledge is central organizing principle in society.

To bell post industrialization offers a solution to many problems in industrial society such as :

- Individual talks to individual rather than interacting with machines.
- Vision of new worker
- Performs interesting and varied jobs in pleasant surroundings
- Is engaged in production of a service and not in production of good.
- Interacts with life people and not mindless machines.
- As customer demands vary, offers personalized service
- Service not fragmented to which there was lack of identification with product – there is a certain unity in service provided by worker
- Finally new work places is a pleasant office room and personal shop floor.

Some argue that post industrialism is unlike industrialism in its consequences for people. Industrialism promoted alienation as it made material affluence possible. Post industrialism in contrast allowed individual to set its own pace, instead of being paced by machines, by offering work i.e. varied and interesting. Worker does complete jobs instead of fragmented bits of work. Hence post industrialism offers solution to the alienation of man. The critics say that it is too rosy a picture. Marxist would not agree that is alienation can be solved within the frame work of capitalist system of production. To them root cause of alienation is private ownership i.e. what robs worker of his control over tool and production. Employment in service class implies that it is at the cost of agriculture. It's fallacious to equate industrial employment with blue collar manual job services with white. Many tasks involved in the provision of services such as catering, cleaning, entertainment, and transportation or of manual or even menial kind are not very different from

general run of industrial jobs. If industrial employment has remain stationary and many of the new jobs created by the services are manual, the optimistic claim that the alienating condition of industrial work now applies to fewer people would appear to be totally misplaced. The argument that whitecollar workers in the service sector perform varied jobs in a pleasant atmosphere and has come under severe attack. Vast bulks of service sector employees are clerks who have been handed into large impersonal offices. The repetitiveness, division of labor, fragmentation of tasks and monitory that characterize industrial employment are to be found here as well.

Finally, Bell's assertion that there is a growing proportion of professionals within the white collar has been questioned. The expansion of professionals in the service sector is taking place at lowest levels. These people are assigned impressive littlest such as engineer and technologist. However, they hardly enjoy freedom on their job. Their actual job is to perform according to someone else's specifications. They are more providers of information production of scientific knowledge itself has become an industry. With vast number of people performing fairly simple and regulated jobs for a coordinator who alone knows how the pieces fit together to make a whole.

While there are many critiques to Bells's arguments and his prediction, we are indeed moving from a industry oriented economy to a post-industrial one. The new technologies have definitely altered social structures, they have speeded up the globalization processes, of which we will read in our next unit.

27.9 Conclusions

In this unit we have tried to understand what is meant by industrilisation, by try to identify its central features. We have traced industrilisation to Industrial Revolution in England , which definitely propelled industrilisation, not only in England but Europe to be followed by rest of the world. Many scholars were trying to understand the far-reaching changes that were brought about by industrilisation, which has drastically changed the social structures besides, changing production processes. Some of the thinkers, who are important figures of sociology, have commented on these social changes and their implications can still be seen in our present society. The development and progress and quality of life in some of the wealthy nations became a shining model for countries which were left behind-theThird World countries. India too adopted development models from the West. Modernisation which accompanied industrilisation westernization had its impacts on Indian society that have been extensively chronicled. We have tried to cover some of these issues of modernization in many of our other units in this course. We have however tried to present you with two fundamental perspectives on industrlisation, that of Gandhi and Nehru. In our concluding section, we have tried to show that in our fat changing society we are moving even beyond traditional industrialism to processes which involve information technologies.

27.10 Further Reading

Gill, K. S. 1986, *Evolution of Indian Economy*, N.C.E.R.T : New Delhi

Zeitlin, I.M, 2000(7th edition), *Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory*, Prentice Hall:NJ

Unit 28 Globalisation

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- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Different Ideas on What Constitutes Globalisation
- 28.3 Globalisation and the Ideological Positions
- 28.4 Features of Globalisation
- 28.5 Conclusion
- 28.6 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

Globalisation as a phenomenon has been discussed, debated, criticized, glorified very frequently and passionately by different scholars. After reading this unit



you will be able to:

- Explain the different aspects of globalisation;
- Discuss globalisation and different ideologies behind it, in terms of which it is understood;
- Describe the process of globalisation in terms of its features;
- Critically assess the interrelation between globalisation, culture and identity.

1.1 Introduction

You must have found that your city has more labelled clothes than ever before, brand like Nike, Reebok and others which used to be not available in India are now available. In big cities fashion trends are very similar to other big cities of the world. Even TV programs have their global imports, which are localised such as Kaun Banega Karore Pati, Indian Idol. The global influences are being felt everywhere and all over the world. Bangra and Yoga are popular in the West, as cheese, pizza and burgers have become part of our eating habits, at least in big cities and among the younger generation. Big corporations now have offices in different parts of the globe where they carry on activities, so corporations have gone global and in that sense the production processes. There are people who work in India but who don an American accent and keep American time because they work for international call centre. People are travelling evermore on work, in search of work, or migrating to seek better lives. There is definitely lot more movement of people and communication between people. A mother whose son lives in America not only is regularly in contact with her son and daughter-in-law but might travel to stay with him a good part of the year.

These changes that we are witnessing is being termed globalisation. While there are many debates on what exactly constitutes globalisation, what are its chief characteristics and where does it stem from, the changes that we are witnessing are palpable and real.

In this unit we will try and understand the process of globalisation through the various changes that are occurring in society and by following the different analyses offered by various scholars. There are many debates concerning globalisation we will also try and critically evaluate them. We will understand the term and process through the way globalisation is revealed to us in its characteristics. Lastly we will see globalisation process in the context of India.

28.2 Different Ideas on What Constitutes Globalisation

The term Globalisation has entered almost as a part of the vocabulary of all major disciplines, languages, cultures and nations in contemporary times. Given the increasing appeal of the term, numerous public debates and discussions on its constructive and destructive affects have been taking place in academia, political circles and in the civil society. There is an on ongoing controversy over the term Globalisation. Both enthusiasts and critics emphasise the broad range of its impact.

In this section we will take a broad sweep across a range of aspects that have been highlighted by scholars before we come on to some major debates. Let us see if we can separate some of these strands of discussion.

- One aspect which has been debated about is whether globalisation is unique to present age, wasn't the world always global? David Gordon (1988) refers the recent globalisation not as an unprecedented world

transformation but as a relatively minor phase in long term processes of capital accumulation, where as Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson (1992) comment on recent economic transformations as creating larger trade blocs rather than forming an anti-state or non-state global economy. Almost all observers agree that global connections have been thickening for several decades, but the significance of that thickening remains contestable.

- The most common conceptualisation of globalisation is as a one-dimensional process of economic integration/interdependence that has been occurring on a very rapid pace in the current times. In this sense, R.G. Harris defines it as an economic process, i.e. 'The increasing internationalisation of the production, distribution and marketing of goods and services' (cited in Streeten 2001 :167). The two-dimensionality of the process covers economic integration facilitated by the new technology. As an example, for Thomas Friedman globalisation is 'that loose combination of free trade agreements, the Internet and the integration of financial markets that is erasing borders and uniting the world into a single, lucrative, but brutally competitive market place' (ibid: 171). Another aspect of this overwhelming economic view is that globalisation is nothing but liberalisation. Liberalisation refers to a process of removing government imposed restrictions on movements between countries in order to create an open borderless world economy. The evidence for such globalisation in recent decades can be found in the widespread reduction or even abolition of regulatory trade barriers, foreign exchange restrictions, capital controls etc.
- An aspect that many scholars are beginning to acknowledge is how globalisation involves many dimensions of society. Taking it as a multi-dimensional process, Streeten states, 'Globalisation is transforming trade, finance, employment, migration, technology, communications, the environment, social systems, ways of living, cultures, and patterns of governance' (2001 : 8). Holm and Sorensen (1995, cited in ibid) view it as 'the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across borders'. A World Bank publication defines globalisation as 'the growing integration of economies and societies around the world'. This is 'a complex process that affects many aspects of our lives' (World Bank 2002: ix). A recent study by the United Nations (2002: 17), conducted by ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) specifically highlights the multidimensional nature of globalisation. It is noted here that the economic dimension of globalisation 'acts concomitantly with non-economic processes, which have their own momentum and therefore are not determined by economic factors' (ibid). One of the non-economic dimensions include ethical and cultural aspects which ECLAC terms as the 'globalisation of values' and refers to the gradual spread of shared ethical principles as manifested in declarations on human rights which has two main concerns: a) civil and political rights, and b) economic, social and cultural rights. The 'globalisation of values' is increasingly manifested in the aspirations and formation of a 'global civil society' whose capacity for mobilisation and the exchange of information has multiplied by the new information and communications technologies (ibid: 21).
- Some scholars see globalisation as an essential post-industrial society, where communication technologies are the defining feature. Castells looks at the present global age as essentially a net-worked society. The Sociologist Manuel Castells has distinguished a network of society in which a new space of flows exists alongside the old space of places (1989;348;1996-7). What Castells intends to explain is that due to technologically mediated conditions there will be different types of interactions possible vis-a-vis the existing interactions within the given society, such as through satellites, internet, telecommunication linkages and other digital technologies. Castells' analysis overlooks and treats the process in a

segmental manner rather than in a holistic way its nature and consequences. Invariably, in a segmental approach, analysts have studied 'financial or capital globalisation', 'telecommunication or media globalisation' and 'cultural globalisation' as separate developments, and then try to view the impact of the one on the other, for instance, 'financial or capital' globalisation upon other segments such as the 'media', 'communication' or 'culture'. This approach has two weaknesses: first, it fails to help us in comprehending the role of the residual social structural realities and their emergent properties and the way they interact with anyone of these three aspects of globalisation, be it capital, communication or culture.

- Many scholars look at globalisation as a process emanating from the West and therefore another form of westernisation. They equate globalisation with Westernisation or modernisation. This view propounds that globalisation is a dynamic process whereby the social structures of modernity are spread the world over, normally destroying pre-existent cultures and local self determination in the process (Spybey, 1996; Taylor, 2000). Globalisation in this sense is sometimes described as an imperialism of McDonald's Hollywood, Cocacolonisation, MTV generation and CNN (Schiller, 1991). As Martin Khor (1995) aptly comments that globalisation is what we in the third world have for several centuries called colonisation (Khor, 1995).
- Another aspect, which has been looked at by scholars, identifies globalisation as deterritorialisation. Following this interpretation, globalisation entails a reconfiguration of geography so that social space is no longer wholly mapped in terms of territorial places, territorial distances and territorial borders. This usage provides new insights and relatively new conditions whereby globalisation can be referred as supraterritorial relations between people. Deterritorialisation refers to a far reaching change in the nature of social space. Further, the proliferation and spread of supraterritorial – or what we can alternatively term transworld or transborder- connections brings an end to what could be called territorialism, that is a situation where social geography is entirely territorial. current history has witnessed a proliferation of social connections that are at least partly- and often quite substantially- detached from a territorial logic of the kind just described. Such phenomena cannot be situated at a fixed territorial location. They operate largely without regard of territorial distance. They substantially bypass territorial borders. The geography of these global conditions can not be understood in terms of territoriality alone; they also reside in the world as a single place- that is, in a trans world space.

Box 28.01 My family and Other Globalisers

In 1992, I wrote a book titled To-wards Globalisation. I did not realize at the time that this was going to be the history of my family.

Last week, we celebrated the wedding of my daughter, Pallavi. A brilliant student, she had won scholarships to Oxford University and the London School of Economics. In London, she met Julio, a young man from Spain. The two decided to take up jobs in Beijing, China. Last week, they came over from Beijing to Delhi to get married. The wedding guests included 70 friends from North America, Europe and China.

The may sound totally global, but arguably my elder son Shekhar has gone further. He too won a scholarship to Oxford University, and then taught for a year at a school in Colombo. Next he went to Toronto, Canada, for higher studies. There he met a German girl, Franziska.

They both got jobs with the International Monetary Fund in Washington DC, USA. This meant that they constantly travelled on IMF business to disparate countries. Shekhar advised and went on missions to Sierra Leone, Seychelles,

Kyrgyzstan and Laos. Franziska went to Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Russia. They interrupted these perambulations to get married in late 2003.

My younger son, Rustam, is only 15. Presumably he will study in Australia, marry a Nigerian girl, and settle in Peru.

Readers might think that my family was born and bred in a jet plane. The truth is more prosaic. Our ancestral home is Kargudi, a humble, obscure village in Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu. My earliest memories of it are as a house with no toilets, running water, or *pukka* road.

My father was one of six children, all of whom produced many children (I myself had three siblings). So, two generations later, the size of the Kargudi extended family (including spouses) is over 200. Of these, only three still live in the village. The rest have moved across India and across the whole world, from China to Arabia to Europe to America. This one Kargudi house has already produced 50 American citizens. So, dismiss the mutterings of those who claim that globalisation means westernization. It looks more like Aiyarisation, viewed from Kargudi.

Globalisation for me is not just the movement of goods and capital, or even of Aiyars. It is a step towards Lennon's vision of no country.

You may say I'm dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope one day you'll join us. And the world will be one.

(Source: SWAMINOMICS, Times of India, New Delhi, April 3, 2005)

As we can see there is no agreed upon view as to what exactly constitutes globalisation. Globalisation literature is rife with different and contesting views. David Harvey has put some of these argument sin three categories which we will discuss, but before that think about what you have read so far and try and answer the questions in our box on Reflection and action.

28.01 Reflection and Action

Reflect upon your own experiences of day to day life. List at least 10 ways in which your life is influenced by what is happening in other parts of the world. Write an essay of about two pages on "My Definition of Globalisation". You may discuss your essay with other students at your Study Centre.

Conceptualising Globalisation: Three Tendencies

The three tendencies that have been captured and categories by David Harvey are as follows, we are adapting it from the way they are presented by Anthony Giddens

The sceptics: The sceptics, like Hirst and Thompson (1999), Boyer and Drache (1997), think that globalisation is not a new phenomenon; there have been economic interdependence earlier too. They point out to statistics of world trade in 19th century and contend that the present global trade differs only in intensity and therefore it is not new. They say that the world is world economy is not sufficiently integrated to constitute truly global economy. If anything, they argue trade is between three regional groups of countries- Europe, Asia-Pacific, and North America. The countries of European union, for example trade predominantly among themselves. This invalidates the notion of global economy, they argue. Many sceptics focus on the process of reginalisation. They also reject the notion that national governments and states are weakening. According to sceptics national governments play a key role in their involvement in regulating and coordination economic activity.

The hyperglobalisers: The hyperglobaliser take an opposing view to that of the sceptics. They feel that globalisation is very real and its effects can be felt

everywhere. They think that globalisation sweeps across unmindful of borders and territories. A leading thinker belonging to the hyperglobaliser's camp, Kenichi Ohama believes that globalisation is leading us to a "borderless society" – a world in which market forces are more powerful than national governments (Ohama, 1990, 1995). The hyperglobalisers focus their discussion on the decreasing influence of national governments, they are not only challenged by international market forces and big corporations but also by regional and international regional institutions such as European Union, World Bank, WTO etc. These shift according to Albrow (1996) where national governments decline in influence, signals the dawn of a "global age". hyperglobalisers are also the advocates of globalisation with a neoliberal ideology with their prescription and focus on its homogenising nature. The sceptics are mainly the neo-Marxists and radicals who focus on the negative aspects of globalisation and also notice the hybridising cultural side of the process. Neo-Marxists! Marxists highlight the hegemonic character of globalisation.

The Transformationalist: The transformationalist take a middle position. They see globalisation touching a wide spectrum of changes that we are witnessing in modern societies. According to them while the global world is transforming many old patterns continue to exist. They see globalisation as an open and dynamic process which does not have any single source of origin or tendencies, in fact it breaks down established boundaries between internal and external, international and external. The changes many times are contradictory encompassing tendencies which operate in opposition to each other. Kellner seems to take a transformationalist view of globalisation. He does not stress on the aspect of integration. Rather, he focuses on the transformation currently occurring in different spheres of life and the emergence of webs and networks of global relations. He sees globalisation as having both negative and positive consequences, and also both homogenising and hybridising impact plus emergence of identity based defences.

28.3 Globalisation and The Ideological Positions

As you can see from our preceding discussion that there are varying dimensions of globalisation that have been highlighted. There are debates as to where it is leading to whether it is new or extension of what has been happening for many years and as to what constitutes the core of globalisation. We discussed some of these orientations in our previous section. The process of globalisation has also generated various ideological positions. A range of ideologies, such as neo-Marxism-Leninism, post-modernism, critical theories of development, particularly those related to the impact of globalisation on ecology, human rights of the weaker sections such as women, minorities, working classes and other marginalized groups, have generated a strident debate on the social, cultural and economic consequences of globalisation. Martinelli (2003:96) places the growing literature on globalisation conceptually along three main axes which (ideologically/ politically) are put under two broad categories viz. advocates and opponents of globalisation. His categorisation is as under

Hyperglobalisers vs. sceptics

Here, the key distinction between the two positions relates to the degree of novelty of globalisation and its impact on nation-states. **Neoliberals vs. neo-Marxists and radicals**

Here, the key points of differences are the balance between positive and negative impacts of globalisation and its truly global or western hegemonic character. **Homogenization vs. heterogeneity/ hybridization.** The focus here is on the cultural dimension of globalisation.

Here, the first axis of categorisation is regarded as the main, and the other

two as specifications. It is noted that the varied conceptualisations on globalisation differ in terms of the type and number of aspects analysed - causal dynamics, periodisation and trajectory, major actors, (differential) social impact on people, and political implications for state power and world governance. Analyses also differ in terms of the type of countries, social groups, institutions and cultural phenomena under investigation (ibid).

Broadly speaking, Further, there is another important view on globalisation which is known as 'transformationalists'. It stands somewhere in between the other two i.e. the hyperglobalisers and neo-Marxists! Marxists.

Hyperglobalisers conceptualise globalisation mainly with a focus on the economic aspects. It is affirmed that people are getting increasingly integrated into the global marketplace. Economies are being increasingly denationalised due to the formation of transnational networks of trade, finance and production. This is regarded as 'a novel condition, hardly reversible'. This process limits the range of choices of nation-states and individuals, and compels them to follow neoliberal economic policies to be able to compete in the world market. Moreover, the global economy reshapes the existing division of labour between the centre and periphery countries and between the 'North' and the 'South' in the world. It is replacing the existing relations with 'more complex patterns of hierarchy of inequality', which has winners and losers both among and within countries, and with new tacit transnational class allegiances. It is held that the benefits of globalisation outweigh the costs. The neoliberals view globalisation as the triumph of economic liberalism, i.e., the application of economic rationalism to 'nation societies'. It is affirmed that (i) markets provide the most dependable means of setting values on all goods, and (ii) economies and markets can deliver better results than states, governments and the law (see Hudson 2002 :102).

Further, there is proclaimed, in a philosophical vein, the 'end of history' and the triumph of the Western economic and political liberalism to a complete exclusion of any alternative to it (Fukuyama 1992). It is affirmed that there would be no more deep conflicts or ideological divisions in the world. The 'new world order' interdependence based on economic liberty and democratisation created both wealth and solidarity. The spread of market-oriented policies, democratic polities, and individual rights promoted the well-being of all. It did not produce only greater economic efficiency and prosperity, but also extended the idea of liberty. Globalisation is good for the poor as, besides growth, it generally raised their income and reduced the inequality between rich and poor countries (see Dollar and Kraay, in Lechner & Boli eds. 2004). There is emphasised the potential benefits of global integration, though it also had unjust consequences that need to be addressed (see Sen, in ibid). Globalisation is presented as 'a moral imperative with certain economic freedoms as basic to prosperity. Markets are seen as force that propel production, provide means of sustenance outside government and thereby also strengthen democracy (Bhagwati 2004). For the third world, participation in the ILE (interlinked economy of USA, Europe, and Japan) is considered key to prosperity, where there were no absolute winners or losers (Ohmae 2002).

But critics/sceptics view the neoliberal version of globalisation as a prescription/ ideology, not a reality. Sceptics of globalisation include Neo-Marxists/Marxists and radicals. They do not consider globalisation as either beneficial to all or being irreversible. They paint a gloomy picture of increasing inequalities and dominance by the stronger economic actors. There is expressed a fear of a world ruled by profit seeking global corporations. Economic interdependence is found to make countries more vulnerable to the destructive consequences of market shifts. The social fabric/ties also get strained as the winners in the global game become detached from losers. The whole process is lopsided. It

is repressive, exploitative, and harmful to most people in most countries. Globalisation is considered a 'false dawn' (see Gray, in Lechner and Boli eds. 2004). There is loss of sovereignty and autonomous power of nation-states. Market forces are getting more powerful than the states (Strange 1996). The main concern of governments now is to compete for attracting investments. 'National governments are torn between the need to foster economic competitiveness and that of enhancing social cohesion' (Martinelli 2003).

The opponents fault the hyperglobalist thesis of demise of the nation-state for not distinguishing among states with quite different power and influence. They do not consider globalisation a novel phenomenon. They regard it as another wave of internationalisation, involving interactions among predominantly national economies. The patterns of inequality and hierarchy are continuing to prevail and the most 'third world' countries remain marginalised. The governments continue to play a key role, particularly the powerful western states, in determining economic relations. Moreover, transnational corporations are not truly global, because they have their own home state and also regional base. Some sceptics interpret the current phase of internationalisation as the byproduct of the US-initiated multilateral economic order after the Second World War (Gilpin 2000). Callinicos et al (1994) call it a new phase of western imperialism with governments operating as agents of monopoly capital. It is believed that the current process of globalisation is 'incomplete and asymmetric'. Even Soros (2004), a stalwart in global finance, regards the current global capitalist system as 'unsound and unsustainable', in fact, disintegrating due to the increasing distress at the periphery,

imminent breakdown in the global financial system/ international trade. In his view, 'market fundamentalism' is invading even non-economic spheres of life, and hence, it is felt by many scholars that there is an urgent need to 'rethink and reform the global capitalist system'.

The current phase of globalisation is labelled by neo-Marxists/Marxists as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is affirmed by Paul Krugman. He has highlighted the doctrinal and normative/prescriptive nature of the views of the advocates of globalisation, for instance, the 'Washington consensus'. He affirms that conclusions with little basis are constantly put forth and provide the doctrinal support for policy (cited in Chomsky 1999:25). Chomsky mentions two varieties of neoliberal doctrine which characterise the modern history. "The first is the official doctrine imposed on the defenseless. The second is what we might call 'really existing free market doctrine': market discipline is good for you, but not for me, except for temporary advantage" (1991 :34,39). Further, the contemporary process of worldwide change is treated by Marxists/ neo-Marxists as the latest phase of capitalism, and variously characterised as 'global capitalism' (Kurien 1995) 'pancapitalism' (Tehranian, in Lamberton 2002:xv), 'transnational capitalism' (Rivero 2001 :40), and 'technocapitalism' (Kellner 2002:289). Amin (2003) diagnoses (the current phase of) globalisation as the third phase of imperialism - the 'collective imperialism of the Triad' (US, Europe and Japan), wherein comprador bourgeoisies are 'acting as transmission belts for transnational capital that remains a monopoly of the Triad'. Moreover, he differentiates 'active peripheries' from marginal peripheries forming part of the system. The uniqueness of the late 20th century is seriously questioned by Wallerstein (see Lechner & Boli eds. 2004). He affirms that capitalism was always global, but it is not yet fully globalised. The core of the world economy is only over 30 of the world's 200 countries.

The 'transformationalist' view represents another perspective. It differs from the understanding of both the advocates and opponents of globalisation. Sociologists generally tend to interpret globalisation as a 'process at a new level of social reality'. The term 'global society' is sometimes used to describe this 'new reality'. In the opinion of M. Albrow (1990, cited by Hudson 2002),

globalisation refers to all those processes that involves incorporation of the peoples of the world into a single society, a society in which 'humanity' emerges for the first time as a 'collective actor'. The latter aspect is connected with the concept of 'globalisation' defined as 'those values that take the real world of five billion people as the object of concern, the whole earth as the physical environment, everyone living as world citizens, consumers, and producers, with a common interest in collective action to solve global problems (ibid: 1 01).

Further, for Martinelli (2003:96) globalisation implies deep transformation in the spatial organisation because of relations becoming more stretched and more intensively interconnected. There is occurring transcontinental and transregional flows and networks of activities and exchanges. This generates power relations which has major implications on decision making processes. 'New patterns of hierarchy and inequality of inclusion and exclusion are shaped, that cut across national borders'. Kellner also seems to take a transformationalist view of globalisation. He does not stress on the aspect of integration. Rather, he focuses on the transformation currently occurring in different spheres of life and the emergence of webs and networks of global relations. He sees globalisation as having both negative and positive consequences, and also both homogenising and hybridising impact plus emergence of identity based defences.

Transformationalists seem to take a middle position on globalisation. They view it as a multifaceted process with multiple causes like economic, technological, cultural, political.

This perspective does not stress on global integration. It focuses on the emergence of webs and networks of relations among individuals, groups, communities, states, international organisations and transnational actors. Globalisation is seen as leading to an 'unbundling of relationships between sovereignty, territoriality and state power'. It involves a basic restructuring of the nation-state. Moreover, 'globalisation reinforces old patterns of inequalities, but also forms new social hierarchies which penetrate all regions of the world, thus recasting the traditional patterns of inclusion and exclusion. However, significant opportunities for empowerment of individuals, communities and social groups also exist' (Martinelli 2003:98-99). It is accepted that global corporations have homogenising impact on lifestyles and consumption patterns. However, there is also observed increasing hybridisation of cultural traits and the staunch defence of specific identities. Moreover, it is affirmed, 'Globalisation brings about a variety of adjustment strategies by national policies that require a rather active state - not the neoliberal minimum government, but the 'developmental' or 'catalytic' state' (Martinelli 2003). Nation-states are one of the major actors in the emerging 'global governance as a polyarchic mixed-actor system'. There is suggested the need for democratic global governance based on the principles of universal rights and responsibilities (ibid).

Thus, it is observed that globalisation is a highly contentious concept. On one hand it is viewed as a real process of integration, interdependence across countries and peoples in the world. On other hand, it is regarded as a normative prescription, a myth. Similarly, there are widely diverging interpretations of globalisation. On one hand, there are strong advocates professing neoliberal ideology pushing forward economic/financial integration through private sector/ market-led development which, according to them, would be most efficient and dependable yielding more benefits than loss to all, in the long run. On other hand, the bitter critics/sceptics holding neo-Marxist/Marxist ideology call it a new phase of western imperialism/global capitalism which, in their view, would adversely affect the weaker nation-states and peoples. There is

also a middle position adopted by the transformationalists. Their focus is on the emerging new level of social reality (global/single society) that is happening due to increasing transnational/regional flows of networks/exchanges and growing global values like human rights, world citizenship etc. But the process has, in their opinion, both positive and negative implications for different countries and peoples. What is advocated here to redress the problems is a democratic global governance and a catalytic state. These contrasting conceptualisations and theoretical paradigms need to be kept in view in the analysis focussing on any particular country and peoples, including India.

The fact that globalisation has not yet resolved some of the basic contradictions in the realms of culture, economy and human relationships and in some cases it is supposed to have contributed to internal social conflicts goes only to lend credence to such ideologies. According to the contemporary Marxist-Leninist critique, globalisation is only another manifestation of cosmopolitan capitalism with its classic imperialistic orientation remaining intact. Instead of contributing to trans-nationalism, it exposes societies and nations to endemic 'disasters' such as the recent food crisis in Africa and the onset of fundamentalism and communalism, both at the global and national levels. The acute social distresses, cultural conflicts and alienation (see, Patnaik, 1996) of the weaker and marginalized communities contribute to this process. No doubt, globalisation with its emphasis on the supremacy of the market, quest for optimization of profits by the multinational corporations, continual unemployment due to the fluctuations in economy and capitalism-friendly labour laws and control over the management or governance of globalisation by the Bretton Wood inspired institutions of the rich capitalist nations who set the agenda, policies and practices of globalisation lends credence to this critique. In fact, the Human Development Report (2002) echoes this despair and calls for reforms within the international institutions of development such as the WTO, World Bank, IMF, etc., by making them more accountable and representative.

It is said that, "nearly half the voting power in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund rests in the hands of seven countries. And though all countries have a seat and a vote in the WTO, in practice, decisions are taken in small group meetings and heavily influenced by Canada, the European Union, Japan and U.s. In 2000, 15 African countries did not have a single trade representative stationed at the WTO" (The Hindu, July 25, 2002). This political domination contributes to the acute differences in the perception as to the extent that globalisation decrease or increase the levels of economic and social inequalities within a society.

The Marxist-Leninist critique of globalisation is based on a theoretical paradigm which recognizes the role of the historical forces, systems of political economy and social structure. Yet another ideology, the post-modernist criticism of globalisation, is essentially cultural. It derives sustenance from an epistemology which rejects the idea of a system or structure, and posits human social and cultural realities in a perpetual state of symbolic transience or flux, continually in the process of making and unmaking. "It challenges the postulate of rationality (the foundation of market economy) on which most social science categories such as, 'structure', 'system' and 'change' are anchored"; Social systems, according to the post-modern reckoning, are not based on grand theories, and centralised logic and unilineal theories and history but many micro orders, (Singh, 1998: 1). Thus, in the logic of its analysis, history has no role or significance. It treats the conjuncture of events and processes largely in terms of space as 'co-happenings' and not in order of temporal succession. The diversity of existence of identities is recognized but the causality of the same is rejected.

We also witness yet another ideology about globalisation which emanates from the assorted movement of the NGOs. These NGOs represent a variety of 'interest

groups' and many institutionalized forms of activism. The issues of their concern are as diverse as human rights, ecology and sustainable development, rights of the minorities, women, tribes, working classes, etc., which seem to converge upon their opposition to globalisation for reasons some of which have a common basis, and others which are contradictory.

Their ideology in some parts may seem eclectic with the underpinnings of Marxism, post-modernism, ecological and developmental humanism and focus on human rights etc., which are articulated in a generalized form.

We do realise that at the end of this discussion that globalisation is, indeed a very complex process, which arouse very passionate discussions which either condemn it or laude it. To understand it a little better and past all this discussions let us examine the process of globalisation in the way it exhibits itself. In the following section we will look at the characteristics of globalisation in general but also in the context of Indian society.

28.4 Features of Globalisation

Not only is globalisation difficult to capture conceptually, but it is a complex phenomenon which touches many aspects of society. "Although globalisation is associated within big systems such as the world financial market, production and trade and telecommunications, the effects of globalisation are felt equally strongly in the private realm" (Giddens, 2001:61). Let us see if we can capture some of the important characteristics., which not only highlight the important features of globalisation but how the touch many aspects of our every day life.

Information and communication technologies: The use of satellites, internet, telephones , computer networking, television known as information and communication technologies-ITC -have revolutionised the way the world communicates. The traditional cable earlier on could carry less than a hundred voices but by 1997, a transoceanic cable is capable of carrying some 600, 000 voice paths, Communication satellites are expanding too, today there are 200satellites in place facilitate transfer of information around the globe. The internet has emerged as the fastest growing communication tool-some 140 million people worldwide were using the internet in 1998. more than 700 million people are projected to be using the internet by 2001. You can see this proliferation in our own country by the number of cyber cafes computers not only in big cities but also in small towns, though we lag behind some of the more developed countries. ITC is the dominant force in the global system with ramifications in all other spheres of human existence.

The expansion of ITC has brought about a **time-space compression**. You could be chatting online, through the internet, with your friend or family, who is thousands of miles way, and feel that you share your everyday travails much more than a person who is closer home like your neighbour. You could be working in India for company that is located in the US through telecommunication technologies. Although IT industry has existed in India since 1980s, it is only after the new telecom policy of 1999, which introduced private players that communication has been on the rise. The reduced rates in international calling and outsourcing by big corporations has made India on of the leading to Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), which resulted in call-centres and data processing centres.

Box 28.2: Outsourcing

It is a process where company contracts out part of its functions, especially the company's IT related functions and operations, to outside agencies or companies, often outside the country. Many times this is done to save cost, very often the jobs are contracted out to agencies in such countries where labour and other

costs are less expensive.

Apart from this, we can see that world is ever more connected by the fact that world events, entertainment, issues are beamed to you in your living room through TV. Though you don't participate in it directly one becomes apart of global community of audience and participants. According to Anthony Giddens (2001) this shift to global outlook has two dimensions: first, "as a global community people increasingly perceive that social responsibility does not stop at national borders". One can see this global participation, in the case of recent disasters such as the Tsunami which hit India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia or similar such disasters. People express their responsibility and concern through voluntary work, donations, relief work etc. This can also be seen in people's participation, however virtual, on campaigns which concern larger human issues be it human rights or ecology and environmental concerns or political issues. Secondly, people are forging their identities through communication network, across boundaries, many scholars have pointed out this transnational identity forging whether it is among the Hindus spread across the globe or pan-islamisation.

Globalisation of Trade and Finance : An important feature of globalisation is the increasing trade flows between countries. There are many dimensions to the globalisation of trade and finance- breaking down of national barriers of trade, rise of multinational companies and the rise of international financial agencies and regulatory bodies such as WTO.

Liberalisation for India essentially involved relaxation of restrictions on import duties, export restrictions, promotion of foreign investment and permissions for free flow of foreign technology and skills. Along with this, there was considerable loosening of licensing system as well as lifting of reservation on certain products. More importantly, under the dictates of World Bank and IMF, India had to reduce the role of government in many operations. Changes included cutting down subsidies for farming, cutting down fiscal deficit, disinvestment equities in public sector companies, reducing expenditure on social sector and facilitation of foreign direct investment or FDIs. Through all these measures India joined the global economy.

Box 28.3 FDI and MNCs

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is the movement of capital across national frontiers in a manner that grants the investor control over the acquired asset. Thus it is distinct from portfolio investment which may cross borders, but does not offer such control. Firms which source FDI are known as 'multinational enterprises' or Multinational Corporations (MNC Or TNCs). In this case control is defined as owning 10% or greater of the ordinary shares of an incorporated firm, having 10% or more of the voting power for an unincorporated firm or development of a greenfield branch plant that is a permanent establishment of the originating firm.

The largest portion of FDI approvals in India has been in the infrastructure and core structures such as power, telecommunication , energy exploration, chemical metallurgical industries. FDI flows in India have increased substantially.

Economic liberalization and financial liberalization centers on capital movement of which FDI is major form and the major players in these flow of capital is the MNCs

An MNC is a corporation that operates in a number of countries, and has production operation facilities outside the country of their origin. Since end of World War II. According to United Nations estimates there nearly 5000 such companies with investments outside the country. Like e-business concerns MNCs are also motivated by profit concerns, but some do believe that they are beneficial for domestic markets for generating employment opportunities, transfer technology, providing competition thereby by improving standards, quality etc. and also by paying taxes to the host country.

There are several ways in which these companies can be detrimental to host countries and people within. Very large multinationals have budgets that exceed those of many countries. They can have a powerful influence in international relations, given their large economic influence in politicians' representative districts, as well as their extensive financial resources available for public relations and political lobbying. As a result of these, they may have undue influence in the function and policy formulation of governments, which is detrimental to democracies. There is also the concern that they repatriate the profits their own countries rather than invest in host countries. MNC provide jobs but they also drive out small enterprises and jeopardise livelihood of small business. These many others make the MNC operations suspect.

Another aspect of growing trade flows in globalised world is the increasing role of trade regulating bodies such World Trade Organisation-WTO. Let us examine the role of Wto and the implication for Third World in the box below.

Box 28.4 WTO and the Third World

The WTO was established on January 1, 1995 to replace the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a series of post-war trade treaties intended to facilitate free trade. The GATT principles and agreements were adopted by the WTO, which was charged with administering and extending them. Unlike the GATT, the WTO has a substantial institutional structure. The WTO aims to foster dialogue between nations, where governments come together and sort out the trade problems they encounter with one another, rather than engage in trade disputes. Consultation, negotiation and agreement are what the WTO emphasizes. Many WTO decisions, such as adopting agreements (and revisions to them) are determined by consensus. This does not necessarily mean that unanimity is found: only that no Member finds a decision so unacceptable that they must insist on their objection. Voting is only employed as a fall-back mechanism or in special cases. Richard Steinberg (2002) argues that although the WTO's consensus governance model provides law-based initial bargaining, trading rounds close through power-based bargaining favouring Europe and the United States, and may not lead to Pareto improvement. The most notable recent failures of consensus, at the Ministerial meetings at Seattle (1999) and Cancún (2003), Doha (2004) were due to the refusal of some developing countries to accept proposed.

The stated aim of the WTO is to promote free trade, stimulate economic growth and hence make people life more prosperous. As with any economic development, if growth proceeds in a fast or unbalanced way, it will cause structural unemployment and thus worsen poverty. The WTO also promotes economic globalization and free trade, which anti-globalization activists consider problematic. WTO treaties have been accused of a partial and unfair bias toward multinational corporations and wealthy nations.

While the WTO provides equal opportunities for nations to speak, shields governments from lobbying, and encourages good governance, small countries in the WTO are capable of wielding little influence. The WTO itself is criticized as being the tool of powerful lobbies. And while membership is voluntary, critics say that not joining places the non-participating nation under a de facto embargo, creating an international system of forced economic rules discouraging change and experimentation. Despite the WTO aim of helping the developing countries, the influential states in the WTO do focus on their own commercial interests. The needs of the developing countries are often perceived to be ignored. In addition, the issues of health, safety and environment are not principle concerns.

(Source:<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WTO>)

Migration , Multiculturalism and Ethnic identities

People have always migrated since centuries. People migrate due to several reasons (see the unit on migration); for economic reason, to escape persecution, for personal or sentimental reason. The migration in the global age has increased exponentially. The current phase of global movement of

people is compelled by all these reasons but mainly economic. If we look around in our own country we find that it is not so rare any more to find that there is some member of the family or other who has moved for a better life.

Countries like USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand have actively been encouraging immigration. Immigration policies of some of the countries where there is huge Indian population seems to affect the economic status of the country and the people directly connected with migrant population. This can be witnessed in the recent deportation of Indian workers in the gulf or anxiety over the scaling down of H1B visas, which are the visas that Indian technocrats go on.

There are varying perspectives on immigration in the globalisation era. The liberals, especially MNCs advocate liberalisation of immigration laws and policies. They believe that it encourages global prosperity and true completion. The protectionist who oppose them think that corporations are motivated by profit interest, wherein they exploit cheap labour. Then there are xenophobes who fear foreigners and use various arguments to thwart too liberal an immigration policy.

“The November 2005 riots in France have led some to conclude that, although reasonable immigration numbers are welcome in most societies, large numbers can cause immigrants to form closed ethnic neighborhoods that lead to social confrontation and seclusion. Most European countries have not yet limited immigration and immigrants (legal & illegal) range between 7% -20% of the population”(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration>).

There is such mass movement of people across the globe, with preferred destinations of Western European countries, US and Australia by the poorer Third world inhabitants. This has significantly changed the composition of the host society, and often immigration is a controversial issue for some of these countries. There is a fear that cheaper workforce, who are willing to work for less than the prescribed wages, are replacing the locals, which they claim makes them unemployed and cuts down the standard of living etc. The other fear is that of cultural nature; it is heard most strongly in some homogenous old world (European) nations where citizenship was long tied to a person having deep historical roots in the country. Western European nations, Japan, and other countries have long been deeply concerned about their national culture being subsumed. This concern can be especially high when the immigrants are of differing race or religion than the majority.

Despite these fears and incidents of expressions of such fears (the periodic racial riots in UK and the more recent ones in France being an example) at official level and at an ideological level, countries such as Canada, UK France have tried to adopt multicultural policies.

Box 28.5 Multiculturalism

Looked at broadly, the term is often used to describe societies (especially nations) which have many distinct cultural groups, usually as a result of immigration. This can lead to anxiety about the stability of national identity, yet can also lead to cultural exchanges that benefit the cultural groups. Such exchanges range from major accomplishments in literature, art and philosophy to relatively token appreciation of variations in music, dress and new foods. On a smaller scale, the term can also be used to refer to specific districts in cities where people of different cultures co-exist.

(Source:<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism>)

In terms what it constitutes in terms of government policies or approaches in dealing with immigrants, the approaches can be viewed as following

- Monoculturalism: Here the immigrant is expected to assimilate with the

national culture, in such countries the idea of cultural and nationa are conflated. Many Europeans nations thought on this lines, except UK for along time but in the recent decades some of this philosophy is under dilution because of actual presence of many immigrants who differ from them substantially- racially, ethnically and culturally.

- **Melting Pot:** In the United States the traditional view has been one of a melting pot where all the immigrant cultures are mixed and amalgamated without state intervention. However, many states have different language policies within the union.
- **Multiculturalism:** In comparison to the above two approaches, multiculturalism is a view, or policy, that immigrants, and others, should preserve their cultures with the different cultures interacting peacefully within one nation. Today, this is the official policy of Canada, Australia and the UK. Multiculturalism has been described as preserving a “cultural mosaic” of separate ethnic groups, and is contrasted to a “melting pot” that mixes them. This has also been described as the “salad bowl” model.

No country falls completely into one, or another, of these categories. For example, France has made efforts to adapt French culture to new immigrant groups, while Canada still has many policies that work to encourage assimilation. Some, such as Diane Ravitch, use the term multiculturalism differently, describing both the melting pot, and Canada’s cultural mosaic as being multicultural and refers to them as pluralistic and particularist multiculturalism. Pluralistic multiculturalism views each culture or subculture in a society as contributing unique and valuable cultural aspects to the whole culture. Particularist multiculturalism is more concerned with preserving the distinctions between cultures.

Immigration into European countries is a rather recent trend, though until the 1970s and 1980s the levels were relatively modest. Recent increases in immigration have led to the development of political parties in Europe that are almost solely concerned with limiting immigration.(source:<http://en.wikipedia.org>).

The diasporas, who leave their homeland but who still identify themselves with their cultural roots and countries of origin, have proliferated even more so in the recent past. Their attempts to preserve their cultural roots and identity has brought to fore many ethnic identity efforts. With the world being globally connected now it has become easier for communities with a sense of similar identity, however dispersed to come together. There are many transnational organization which feed in to this ethnic consciousness, be it Hindu, Muslim or sub national identities such as Telugu , Bengali etc. (you will read about this in grater detail in our elective course on Diaspora and Transnational Communities).

As you can see, Technology and changes in economy have implications for all aspects of society. We will try and understand another feature of globalization that is much debated-the cultural globalization.

Homogenisation and Hybridisation of Culture

A very significant feature of globalisation as we mentioned earlier too is the flow of several things technology, money, people and culture, which is highly mediated by global technology and media. So we have Bollywood influencing fashion in UK, as much as MTV and other American programs influencing not only the Indians but world at large. This confluence of influence has raised questions such as; whether the world is getting homogenised by Western influences, especially America? Terms such as McDonaldisation, Coco-colaisation are used to point out dominance of giant corporation of America influencing

the cultures of the world and taking over local market.

Griffin (2004:262) takes note of the argument that globalisation has strong homogenising influences that weaken and destroy existing cultures, move towards a world culture under US hegemony. 'The American way of life, or more likely a pale imitation of it, will become the world's way of life'. However, he thinks that the emergence of a single 'world culture' is highly unlikely. 'Instead, globalisation and the associated cultural interpenetration are more likely to lead to new permutations, new combinations, new options, and new cultures' (ibid: 254). With increasing pace of globalisation, in his opinion, the idea of 'global citizenship' would gain support. But it would not pose a threat to the existing loyalties and identities - local, national, regional. It would neither supersede existing loyalties nor represent the creation of a global culture. But 'It would be a step towards recognition of the fact that globalisation affects us all and we should all have a voice in determining how the effects are managed' (ibid: 262).

Appadurai (1997) is also strongly predisposed to the view that globalisation is not the story of homogenisation. In his view, globalisation is a deeply historical, uneven and even 'Localising' process. 'Globalisation does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenisation or Americanisation'. The geneology of cultural forms, in a theoretical vein he says, is 'about their circulation across regions, the history of these forms is about their ongoing domestication into local practice' (p.17). In case of India he talks about how history and geneology inflect one another, and how global forms take local forms. Another important phenomenon he is concerned with is that of the diaspora which is part of the cultural dynamic of urban life in most countries in the world. In this connection, the joint force of electronic mediation and mass migration 'coconstitute new sense of the global as modern and the modern as global' (p.10). The diasporic phenomenon of today, he observes as explicitly transnational - even postnational.

Singh (2002) recognises that globalisation was bound to put pressures on the Indian culture. He envisages some degree of acceleration towards homogenising of cultural forms and activities (lifestyle, dress, food etc) in the country. However, he asserts that 'the social structure and cultural system in India are intrinsically based on pluralism and diversity'. The Indian society (both caste and tribe) is segmented in communities which enjoy 'enormous cultural autonomy'. 'This provides enormous cultural resilience to communities in India to filter the effects of globalisation through refractory and prismatic adaptations' (p.64). Moreover there is observed an enhanced sense of self consciousness and awareness of identity. Those elements of globalisation are resented that encroach upon or does not promote the core cultural values of society. So, globalisation has both facets - homogenisation and (cultural) identity enhancement. In case of the Indian diaspora, he finds the trends of cultural fusion. Also in India, at the level of popular culture of music, dance, dramatic, cinema etc., the new trend is one of fusion of traditional Indian forms/ styles and western/global forms/styles. This emergent popular (fusion) culture, he regards as posing 'a threat to the indigenous local, regional or ethnic identity of cultural traditions in so far as it abstracts culture from people's rhythm of life and its natural expressiveness or vitality, and converts its new packaging into a commodity' (p.103). In this process the traditional identity deeply embedded in community life (caste, class, tribe, principles of hierarchy and reciprocity) are "metamorphosed into a faceless 'audience' ". This, he thinks, is not entirely due to globalisation, but rather 'germane in the very paradigm of modernization which we along with the rest of humanity wilfully celebrate' (ibid). As regards modernisation, Gupta (2000) talks about the process of westoxication in India.

Global Civil society and Nation-State

Civil society is viewed as a sphere of society distinct from the state, with forms and principles of its own. The institutions of civil society include the church, education, trade unions and work and other organisations which act to a lesser or greater degree independently of the state. Therefore, civil society has been the arena of social and political protestation movements, particularly movements such as human rights, animal rights, environmentalism, trade unionism and peace movements. With global interconnectedness civil society initiatives, be it human rights or environment organizations or movements have gone beyond the local. They have created a global space. These spaces are delineated by networks of economic, social and cultural relations, and they are being occupied by conscious actors, in physically separated locations, who link together in networks of particular political and social purposes. There many international organization which network over distance traversing international boundaries. "In 1909, there were 176 private international associations, by 1951 they had multiplied to 832 and in 1985 there were at least 4615. However, such a high figure can be misleading because INGOs can be anything from the International Bottle Collectors Society, the International Committee of Catholic Nurses, to Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) and Amnesty International. But the important point is that each organisation has created a global arena, outside of purely national interests, in which common values, aims, concerns and even ideologies are discussed and acted upon. But it is the larger and better organised INGOs such as FOEI, Greenpeace, Oxfam and Amnesty which can be seen as having the greater influence on national governments and therefore the autonomy of nation-state actions" (source: www.suite101.com/article.cfm/sociology/).

By undertaking campaigns beyond their own frontiers that help to change the global agenda, INGO members can bypass their own governments and act directly in global politics and thus open up new arenas for political participation. In this way, governments loose their traditional role as the sole external representatives of those they govern and this weakens, in part, their claim to legitimacy. Also, global actors, such MNCs, international regulatory organizations like WTO and financial organizations like IMF and World Bank have all produced arenas which exert influence on nation -states and function both within and without states.

This has raised questions whether the nation-state's legitimacy and authority are eroded. The extreme positions on this issue have pronounced nation states as dead. Rosenau ,does not take this extreme position but argues that there has been a shift from industrialism and international politics, where the nation-state dominated global relations, to an era of post-industrial and post-international politics where the nation-state has to share global relations with international organisations, transnational corporations and transnational social movements, making the state and its local needs subservient to global forces.

Robert Gilpin argues that the process of globalisation is the result of a permissive political order, which generates the stability needed to encourage connections, by the exercise of power between hegemonic nation-states. Therefore, the present era of global interconnectedness has been achieved due to the existence of a stable and secures world order, in which the hegemonic liberal democracies utilise military power and supremacy for economic and political purposes. Gilpin's primary factor is therefore of a political logic which views the process of globalisation as depending upon the rise and decline of hegemonic powers and the existence of a secure world order that political equilibrium produces (Ibid).

Do you think the process of globalisation taking place in India is positive or negative in nature?

Write a report of one page on “the Nature of Globalisation in India.” You have to give clear explanation for choosing one or the other point of view. Discuss your note with other students at your Study Centre as well as your Academic Counsellor.

28.6 Conclusion

The experience of Globalisation has a mixed feeling, both of enchantment as well as disenchantment. There are as many pro globalisation arguments as there are anti-globalisers. The “anti-globalisation”(a term that is preferred by the media), group constitute many activist and public interest group who do not necessarily oppose globalisation per se , but seek to ‘globalise justice’, as Noam Chomsky one of the leading critics of globalisation policies, says. We have tried to present to you the different ideological positions from where various aspects of globalisation are argued. We have loosely summarised some important features of globalisation, which they we have categorised under different sections all influence and lead in to each other. As a process that is on going , globalisation literature is ever expanding and there are revisions and new perspectives that are brought forth.

28.7 Further Reading

Giddens, A. (1990) *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Unit 29 Social Movements: Meanings and Dimensions

Contents

- 29.1 Introduction
- 29.2 Concepts of Social Movements
- 29.3 Origin of Social Movements.
- 29.4 Components of Social Movements
- 29.5 Transformation of Social Movements
- 29.6 Conclusion

Learning Objectives

Social movements have emerged to be a crucial area of social science inquiry. This unit deals with

- the concepts of social movements
- origin of social movements
- element of social movements and
- transformation of social movements

29.1 Introduction

Social Movements are parts of social progression. These phenomena represent varieties of collective actions across time and space. As social processes social movements emerge as manifestation of collective discontent against the established social, economic and political orders. These emerge as the collective critic of the society rejuvenating vital social forces. As student of sociology you would be interested to know the meanings and several social, political, economic, cultural etc dimensions of social movements.

This unit introduces you to some of the fundamental issues of social movement. It aims to conceptualize social movement from a socio-historical perspective. There are several traditions of conceptualizing social movements. Glimpses of these traditions are also presented here. There are several causes of social movements. In this unit we have elaborated the causes or origins of social movement and have explained the roles of ideology, leadership and organization in social movements. The processes of transformation of social movements are in also discussed here. Since we would be dealing with varieties of issues, involved in social movements in the following units of this block these key issues are clarified at the outset for cognitive coherence of this the block.

29.2 Concept of Social Movements

Social movements have broadly been perceived as 'organized' or 'collective effort' to bring about changes in the thought, beliefs, values, attitudes, relationships and major institutions in society or to resist any change in the above societal arrangements. Blumer (1951) defines social movements as 'collective enterprises to establish a new social order of life'. To Toch (1965) social movement is an 'effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common'. According to Haberle (1972) it is 'a collective attempt to bring about a change in certain social institutions or to create entirely a new order', J.R. Gusfield (1972) perceives a social movement as a socially shared demand for change in some aspect of the social order'. To Wilson (1973), social movements may either be for a change or resistance to

change. Thus to him, a social movement is an organised endeavour to bring about or to resist large-scale changes in the social order by non-institutionalized means.

a) **Historical and Social Context of Conceptualization**

It is significant that social movements are conceptualized in a particular historical and social context. For example in the North American society, in the wake of the emerging threat from the Fascist and the Communist movements in the 1930s "social movements are conceptualized by scholar like Haberle in 1951 as the potentially dangerous forms of non-institutionalized collective political behaviour which if left unattended, threatened the stability of the established ways of life". Social movement however, is not solely destructive. As a collective agency it possesses several creative potentials. Thus many scholars like Blumer and many other have highlighted the emergence of new norms of adaptive behaviour, problem solving and learning orientation potentially present in social movements. In the 1950s and 1960s the scholars like Turner and Killian (1957), Parsons, (1969) Smelser and others viewed social movement from collective behaviour perspective. In this approach social movements are viewed as non-institutionalized collective actions, which are not guided by existing social norms, formed to meet undefined or unstructured situations and are understood in terms of a breakdown either in the organs of social control or normative integration, due to structural changes. The resulting strains, discontent, frustration, and aggression from this situation ultimately lead the individual to participate in non-institutionalized. It is also pointed out that this behaviour pattern has a 'life cycle', which moves from spontaneous crowd action to the formation of public and social movement (Cohen, 1995:671-72, cf. Jamison and Eyerman, 1991:14).

Again each society has its own perception on the social movements which is developed based on its own socio-economic, cultural and the intellectual tradition. For example, the scholars in the Europe conceptualized social movements in a somewhat different term, based on their socio-political conditions and the intellectual heritage, from that of the Americans. While in the US it is an empirically observable phenomenon, in Europe it has emerged to be theoretically connected object. The Marxian theoretical position was widely followed in Europe; Weberian position was widely used in the United States.

It is significant that after the World War II the philosophy of the 'welfare state' was widely accepted all over the world except in the authoritarian regimes. As a corollary to this welfare state philosophy institutionalized conflicts between labour and capital were recognised as legitimate collective social behaviour in the modern society. According to Eyerman and Jamison the existence of strong, institutionalized, reformist social democratic labour movement in all the countries of Western Europe affected the way social movements were conceived by social scientists. As the conflict between labour and capital got institutionalized in the social democratic tradition, labour movement also got a legitimate place as organised collective behavior in the modern societies. In the United States social movement has remained anti ideological and the distinction between social movement and social institution. Thus Smelser distinguishes between general movement (long term shift in societal norms and values and change in attitude and consciousness) and social movements (immediate observable outburst of collective behaviour pushing long term changes along with it). Thus he distinguishes between norm and value oriented social movements respectively. And accordingly, a social movement to him, was an observable expression of general movement (Eyerman and Jamison , 1991:17-18)

Social movements in the developing countries were manifested in different

socio political contexts. Anti colonial, workers and the peasant movements were the dominant patterns of collective actions with a wide political connotation in built in these movements. While the anti colonial movements aimed at the liberation of the colonized countries from the imperial powers, the workers and the peasant movements were directed against the oppressive capitalists and landowners of these countries. Significantly, the nationalist spirit of the cross section of the population was the most appealing force in the anti colonial movement, while the workers and the peasant movements were mostly organised based on the Marxian philosophy of class struggle. In the post World War II period success stories of the workers and the peasant movements in the then Soviet Russia, China, Vietnam and Cuba had become the guiding spirit to the workers and the peasant movements in the developing countries. Social movements of various forms have got wider legitimacy in the political culture in the societies. In a state of increasing poverty, illiteracy, corruption and sharpening class inequality a vast section of the population have accepted organised collective action as a mode of protest and survival. However, in the wake socio political transition, globalisation and introduction to new economic order in these countries the forms of collective action have under gone a qualitative change.

b) Change in Perception since late 1950s

The established social and the political order of Europe and America received a severe jolt in late 1950s and 1960s with the vehement outburst of the Black civil rights, students, women's, peace, gay and environment etc. movements. The hitherto existing theoretical perspectives however, were unable to explain these movements which marked a sharp departure from the earlier organised movements of labor and the working class. These departures were largely viewed in terms of the emergence of new social actors and categories due to the fundamental shift in social structure and the emergence of post-industrial society. The 'postindustrial movements engage different actors, different loci of conflict and different issues than those of the industrial society. Even at the empirical level, these social movements exhibited new characteristics and new ideas. Hence there was a need to move beyond the existing framework of explanation.

Touraine (1981, 1983) observes these phenomena as 'new social movement being potential bearers of new social interests'. To him, it is through the process of collective will formation that social movements come to recognize themselves as collective actors with a historical project. The European tradition tried to discover a process of new knowledge and collective identity formation in these actions. Here the most common approach has been to analyze social movement to be the carriers of political projects, and historical actions.

Thus in the European tradition social movement is seen in terms of structures and long term processes. There is a concern for distinguishing the new from the old social movements.

For the European sociologists, it is the political meaning of the movement that is of utmost significance. For example, Alberto Melucci (1988) sees social movements in primarily symbolic terms and identity formation as a kind of dramaturgy. Social movements make power visible, and they challenge the dominant meaning systems or symbols of contemporary everyday life. He talks about the issues of identity in social movements in great length. We shall discuss this issue in the next two units of this block.

The American sociologists have however, seen knowledge and identity as non-empirical objects. The knowledge component of a social movement to them provide the issues or ideologies around which movements mobilize resources or socialize individuals.'

Since 1960s and onward the collective behaviour approach is being contested by the resource mobilisation theorists to emphasis on the effectiveness of the movement organization (see Zald and McCarthy 1987). As an alternative to collective behaviouralism, the theory of resource mobilisation has emerged in the American tradition to explore why some movements are more successful than others. Tilly (1978) for example identifies collective action in terms of the pursuit of common interest, which is typical of social, all movements. This approach assumes that collective actions are related to the specific opportunity structures. Here importance is given on the rationality of human action, whereby the participants in the social movement calculate the cost and benefits of their participatory action in collective mobilization. In this approach social movements are seen 'either as the creation of entrepreneurs skillful in the manipulation or mobilisation of social resources or as the playing out the social tensions and conflicts'. Thus the motivation of the actors is seen as rational economic action. The resource mobilization theory, indeed, aims to interpret those sets of social movements that are the visible parts of the American social reality in management term. It is linked to the policy problem of containment. (Ibid: 47)

Social movements in the developing countries have conventionally been conceptualized either from the Marxian or from the Functionalist perspectives. However the proliferation of the new social movements, manifestation of new form of collective actions, resurgence of the violence in the new contexts and the articulation of new forms of collective actions in these societies have generated enormous interests among the social scientists, policy planners and social activists for the study of social movements. However there has been a tendency to analyze social movements of these societies following the theoretical tools widely used in the western societies.

Reflection and Action 29.1

What do you mean by social movements? How has the issue of identity been conceptualized as an essential part of social movements?

29.3 Origin of Social Movements.

There are several schools of thoughts on the origin of social movements. The classical model of thought is represented by the versions of mass society, collective behaviour, status inconsistency, raising expectations, and relative deprivation.

- a) The **mass society** theorist, like Kornhauser (1959), is of the view that due to the lack of an intermediate structure people in the mass society are not integrated in the society. This leads to alienation, tension and ultimately social protest. In the mass society individuals are related one another not by variety of groups etc., but by their relation to a common authority, i.e. the state. In the mass society, in the absence of independent groups and associations people lack the resource to ward off the threat to their autonomy. In their absence people lack the resources to restrain their own behaviour as well as that of others. Social atomization engenders strong feelings of alienation and anxiety, and therefore, the disposition to engage extreme behaviour to escape from these tensions (Kornhauser 1996 : 92). It is pointed out that the mass society is conditioned by elite domination over the mass. It replaces the democratic rule. In this society individuals are objectively atomized and subjectively alienated. In this system people are available for mobilization by elite. To Kornhauser "alienation heightens responsiveness to the appeal of mass movements because they provide the occasions for expressing resentment against what is, as well as promises of a totally different world. In short, people who are atomized readily become mobilized" (Ibid: 92).

- b) The proponents of the theory of **status inconsistency**, like Broom (1959) and Lenski (1954), are of the view that the objective discrepancy between persons ranking and status (dimension e.g., education, income, occupation) generate subjective tensions in the society leading to cognitive dissonance, discontent and protest. The state of severe status discrepancy, according to these scholars, lead to subjective tensions and dissonance. According to Geschwender (1971) the set of circumstances described by the status inconsistency hypothesis would produce varying intensities of dissonance and dissonance-reducing behaviour according to the degree of discrepancy between relevant status dimensions (cf. Mc Adam 1973 : 136).
- c) The theory **structural strain** as propagated by Smelser, Lang and Lang, Turner and Killian suggests that any severe structural strain can help manifest social movements. To Smelser the more severe the strain, the more likelihood of social movements. In general it is argued that there are sequences leading to the manifestation of social movements. These sequences move from structural weakness due to the strain in society leading to psychological disturbances and ultimately to the manifestations of social movements. There are, however variety of reasons behind the structural strain. Individuals experience strain out of disruption in the normal functioning of the society. this disruption may be caused by the process of industrialization, urbanization, migration, increase in unemployment. The increase in the quantum of disruption is positively related to the manifestation of social movement. In this perspective social change is the source of structural strain. Social change is described as stressful because it disrupts the normative order in which people are accustomed leading to a feelings of anxiety, fantasy and hostility (Mc Adam 1997). Thus in general this theory visualizes social movements as collective relations to such strains that create severe tensions. Some aggregate of there tensions reach reach to a “boiling” point triggering social emergency. This model emphasizes wage on the psychological effect that strain has on individuals than on the desire for a political goal (Ibid)
- In this context it is important to mention here that Smelson has highlighted the significance of the generalized beliefs' in conjunction with other five factors - structural conduciveness, structural strain, a precipitating factor, mobilization of the participants for action, and the failure of social control are necessary conditions for a collective episode (Smelson, cf. Walsh 1978: 156)
- Thus the classical model has observed social movements as response to structural strain, it is concerned with the psychological effect that stain has on individual and that collective participation in the movement is guided by urgent psychological pressure and not by the aim to change the political structure. (McAdam, D. 1996: 135-143)
- d) The **theory of Relative Deprivation** has been got a place of prominence in the social movement study. In the Marxian analysis economic deprivation has been identified to be the prime cause of social conflict among the two antagonistic classes i.e. the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. To Aberle (1966) deprivation has also non-material base e.g. status, behaviour, worth etc. Relative deprivation, i.e., the discrepancy between legitimate expectations and the reality is the central point of social movement. Gurr (1970) has perceived deprivation as a gap between expectations and perceived capabilities involving three generalised sets of values: economic conditions, political power and social status (cf.Rao, 1982)
- e) The **theory of Cultural Revitalization**. As propagated by Wallace (1956) expresses the view that social movements are manifested out a deliberate, organised and conscious action of the member of the society to construct a more satisfying culture for themselves. To him, the revitalization

movements undergo four phase of progression: from cultural stability to increased individual stress to cultural distortion and disillusionment to cultural revitalization.

It is to mention here that no element of strain and deprivation alone can produce a movement unless there is a subjective perception about these objective conditions of deprivation. Ideology, organization and leadership play crucial role towards the manifestation and sustenance of social movements. We shall be dealing with the issues in the next section of this unit.

Reflection and Action 29.2

You must have seen several discontents to get collectively manifested in your society. Are all these discontents being termed as social movements? What are their origins?

29.4 Components of Social Movements

Conventionally ideology, collective mobilisation, organisation and leadership are identified to the vital elements of social movements. Ideology provides a broad frame of action and collective mobilisation in the social movement. It also provides legitimacy to the process of interest articulation organized collective action. There are different ways of formulating ideology in a social movement. However, in the context of new social movements role of ideology has been a subject of close scrutiny. Some aspects of this issue we shall discuss in the next unit.

Collective mobilization is again a central element of a social movement. The nature and direction of a social movement is widely shaped by the nature of collective mobilisation. Collective mobilisation may be radical, non-institutionalized, spontaneous, large scale or it may be non-violent, institutionalized, sporadic, restricted. It may also undergo a process of transformation from radical to reformatory or institutionalized. Routinisation of charisma is an illustration to this point.

Leadership and organization are closely linked to the process of collective mobilisation. A leader can be charismatic figure or a democratically elected one. In the context of new social movements the issues of leadership, organization ideology and collective mobilisation have acquired several new dimensions.

For years, social movements as an area of legitimate sociological research have occupied a position of marginality both in the functionalist and Marxist paradigm. For the functionalists social movements were sources of potential disruption to an entity. Here only by assigning a marginal position to social movements was 'integrity of the functional theoretical system ensured. On the other hand, though the Marxist analysis is concerned with social transformation, this has identified the "classes" as the sole agents of social transformation. Non-class movements are viewed critically, and sometimes with contempt or hostility' (Scott, A. 1990: 2). Over the years, however, these single order explanations have proved to be inadequate in analyzing the complexity of the phenomena of social movements, and a vast body of literature has emerged in this emerging area of social inquiry. These studies have made sincere efforts to comprehend the issues and dynamics of social movements by using cases from various parts of the world. Significantly, the dynamics and components of the social movements—ideological orientation, organizational set-up, patterns of mobilization, leadership, tactics of collective action, issues involved in the social movements and their linkages with the wider social processes and so on—are critically scrutinized through their efforts to explain the phenomena of collective mobilization with new perspective(s). Thus in these efforts of the social scientists there has been not only the quest for

identification of the 'newness' in the emerging social movements of the 1960s and thereafter, but also a genuine urge to locate the various elements of commonalties in these episodes.

New Components: New ideals, Collective identities and Resources

In the context of the emergence of new social movements the issues of values, culture, subjectivity, idealism, morality, identity, empowerment, etc., have got new coinage and added prominence in these efforts. Thus Bertaux (1990) adds the view that 'subjectivity' and 'idealism' are essential elements of social movement and must be taken seriously.

Similarly, social movements help generate a sense of collective identity and new ideas. Melucci has emphasized on collective identity formation in the context of new social movements. To him, social movements grow around relationships of new social identity that are voluntarily conceived 'to empower' members in defense of this identity (Melucci, 1996). Eyerman and Jamison (1991) assert that 'by articulating consciousness, social movement provides public spaces for generating new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas (1991: 161-66). To Hegedus (1990) involvement in an action is a matter of conscience and emotion, of responsibility (1990: 266).

However participation in social movements may not necessarily always be for the quest of an identity; rather, it may be for the gratification of political and material interests. Tilly (1978a): McAdam (1982), Tarrow (1994 and many others are of the view that social movements manifest in response to the increase in the potential political opportunities and growing receptivity of the state to the activities of the challenging groups. In general, these scholars emphasize on the various resources involved in the manifestation and operationalisation of social movements.) Tilly (1978a) for example identifies collective action in terms of the pursuit of common interest, which is typical of social movements. This approach, known as resource mobilization, assumes that collective actions are related to the specific opportunity structures. Here importance is given on the rationality of human action, whereby the participants in the social movement calculate the costs and benefits of their participatory action in collective mobilization. In this approach social movements are seen 'either as the creation of entrepreneurs skillful in the manipulation or mobilization of social resources or the playing out the social tensions and conflicts'. Thus the motivation of the actors is seen as rational economic action. The resource mobilization theory, indeed, aims to interpret those sets of social movements that are the visible parts of the American social reality in management terms. It is linked to the policy problem of containment (47).

Reflection and Action 29.3

Critically analyze the relevance of identity and ideology in social movements.

29.5 Transformation of Social Movements

Every social movement is having a life history and undergoes a process of transformation. The movement may emerge to be routinised accompanying a decline in support for a movement, (Clark, Grayson & Grayson 1975: 19). Such process of transformation of the movement is indeed contextual and cultures, polity and economy specific. Zald studied transformation to social movements in the comparative frame. He finds that the process of transformation of social movements in the United States and Western Europe has been oriented to be reformist while in the Eastern Europe social movement transformed itself into regime challenges (Zald 1988: 19-24). It is observed in the developed societies that in the absence of a shared culture of popular opposition to the authorities and powerful groups, in the absence of a grass-roots organisation structure, lack of space for unconventional tactics and likely co-option of the dissidents

and critics by the state, collective mobilization are not sustained for a larger time (Oberschall 1978, Gamson 1975, Walsh 1978). Here most of the social movements are institutionalized in nature.

The emergence of a 'national social movement' from within the institutionalized frame of reference of the state, as pointed out by Tilly (1998), "a social movement is neither a party nor a union but a political campaign. What we call a social movement actually consists in a series of demands or challenges to power-holders in the name of a social category that lacks an established political position" (Tilly 1985: 735-36).

As pointed out earlier, ideology, organization, leadership, subjectivity, idealism and orientation towards change are important components of social movements and closely attached to the process of collective mobilization and new identity formation. Change in the form of these components brings tremendous change in the character of the social movements, and accordingly social movements may also be categorized. P.N. Mukherjee (1979) categorizes social movement as 'revolutionary movement' and 'quasi-movement' based on the nature and direction of change initiated by the process of collective mobilization (in a movement under reference). To him, when collective mobilization aims at effecting wide-ranging and far-reaching changes of a system it may be called a revolutionary movement, and when it aims for changes within a system only it may be called a quasi-movement. Sociologists observing the life histories of various social movements point out that sooner or later a social movement becomes subject to the process of routinization. Often a protest movement starts off with a radical ideology but develops its own establishment in turn. To Rao (1985), when a movement with a defined ideology becomes a well-established political party, it ceases to be a movement (1985: 251). SinghaRoy (1992) highlights that in the Indian context any attempt to analyze social movements ought to reflect upon the dynamics of the movements over a period of time since the transformation of these movements are not discreet. Rather, the ideological re-orientation and organizations of those movements continue to remain attached with the collective mobilization in one form or the other. Thus over a period of time there is the process of institutionalization of mobilization. T.K. Oommen (1994) points out that the processes of mobilization and institutionalization do co-exist, and that 'institutionalization provides new possibilities of mobilization'. According to him, the processes of institutionalization and mobilization are to be viewed essentially to be the two different phases of a movement 'rather than mutually inimical processes ... In the final analysis mobilization is not displaced by institutionalization but goes hand-in-hand to a large extent and often the later process accentuates the former' (Oommen 1994: 251-53). (We shall discuss this issue in unit 32 again)

The process of institutionalization, according to Oommen (1984), refers to a 'socially prescribed system of differentiated behaviour based on a relatively stable interaction pattern hinged on socially accepted values, norms, roles and practices'. While studying the process of institutionalization of collective mobilization he emphasized the role of institutional entrepreneurs towards the process of institutionalization. He however visualizes a contradiction in the institutional role of such entrepreneurs, as all may not accept their initiatives. Thus to him institutionalization of mobilization may not lead to bureaucratization, formalization or a status quo. It may rather bring 'with it possibilities of change, because the value-dissensus it creates may eventually lead to confrontation between the contending collectivities which provide the potential for continuous change' (Oommen 1984: 234-5). In his study of the agrarian labour movement in Kerala he highlights that the emergence of movement organization leading to routinization of charisma, development of bureaucratic structure, emergence of a parallel elite, persistence of mobilization beyond the purpose for which it emerged, invariably lead to the institutionalization of social movement. He argues that 'there is no inherent

tendency towards institutionalization of a social movement even when it occurs, it does not necessarily stop or even decelerate the process of mobilization which is so fundamental and prime to the very survival of a movement'. To him mobilization implies a collective action affecting the quality of politics. It calls for the 'induction of new structure into the system to meet the new challenges. That is mobilization necessitates the creation of new institutions and their institutionalization'. He also finds that mobilization is a continuous process with a varying scale and intensity over a period of time (Oommen 1984: 238).

While examining the issues of transformation of social movements in India, the observation made by Bipin Chandra (1996) in the context of the Indian national movement is worth mentioning. He highlights that this movement 'derived' its entire force from the militancy and spirit of self-sacrifice of the masses, including a large section of the peasantry and small landlords. This movement followed the strategy of truce-struggle-truce, in which phases of extra-legal mass movements alternate with more passive phases carried on within the confines of legal space. To Chandra, this strategy of Gandhi had the capacity to utilize the constitutional space without getting co-opted, and to maintain contacts with the masses and absorb their creative energies. This strategy, according to Chandra, bears close resemblance to the strategy of war of position as put forward by Gramsci. Gramsci saw India's political struggle against English as containing three forms of war: war of movement, war of position and underground warfare. Gandhi's passive resistance was a war of position, which in certain movements becomes war of movement and in others, underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes are war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belong to underground warfare (Gramsci 1996: 23).(1998)

The Indian National Congress accepted the strategy of war of position, which had two basic thrusts. It was hegemonic and it alternated between phases of extra-legal mass struggle and phases of truce functioning within the law. This entire political process of 'truce-struggle-truce' was an upwardly spiraling one which also assumed that the freedom struggle would pass through several stages ending with the transfer of power by the colonial regime (Chandra 1996: 26-9).

Reflection and Action 29.3

From you known experience or bases on secondary source of information write a life history of transformation of a social movement in about 500 words.

29.6 Conclusion

In this introductory unit of this block we have raised several issues for discussion which would be dealt with in the remaining three units of the block. As the outset we have clarified the meaning and dimensions of social movements. The conversional modes of conceptualization of social movements, the shift in this mode since lats 1950s, the emergence of new social movements, the European, American and the Indian orientation of social movement studies are discussed here. We have also examined the issues origin and vital elements of social movements. A brief discussion on social movement studies in Indian is also presented in this block.

Further Readings

1. Shah, G. (ed.) 2004 *Social Movements*. Sage Publication: New Delhi

2. SinghaRoy, D.K. 2004 *Peasant Movements in Post Colonial India: Dynamic of Mobilisation and Identity*; Sage Publication: New Delhi

3. Singh, R. 2003 *Social Movements, Old and New*. Sage Publication: New Delhi

Unit 30 Types of Social Movements

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit on types of social movements you will be able to:

- describe the nature of social conflict;
- explain the types of social conflicts;
- discuss the polymorphy of social movements and the problem of classification;
- develop a typology of social movements, and finally;
- distinguish between the Old and New types of social movements.

30.1 Introduction

It is desirable, that before we initiate the discussion on the 'types of social movements' or try to develop a typology of movements, some preliminary explanation about its conceptual background need to be presented. Social movements are a form of collective action. Collective action refers to the mobilisation of a group of people putting their efforts including struggles and strives to achieve certain collectively shared goals or values held as important for society. It may be realised that collective actions can be consensual and co-operative without any element of conflict. One can visualise the co-operative efforts of a group of people to make a ceremonial or festive occasion a grand success. These are examples of consensual and non-conflictual collective actions. In the study of social movements, it is important to note that we deal only with conflictual collective actions. Neil Smelser refers to them as, "uninstitutionalised mobilisation for action" (1962:71). The conflictual un-institutionalised collective actions can be of various types. They may range from an episodic, short-lived, leaderless and unorganised collective outburst of, some times of violent nature, of an unexpected gathering of a wayside crowd to a systematically organised with some degree of understandable structure with leadership and communication struggling for or against certain social and cultural practices or to achieve certain set of goals and objectives held important for the community or society.

We need to remember that while all social movements carry some elements of conflicts in them, not all forms of conflictual collective actions can be treated as social movement. In social sciences, different forms of conflictual collective actions carry specific conceptual meaning. Collective action, such as *riot*, *rebellion*, *revolt* and *revolution* carry conflict contents, including the element of violence in them. Readers are advised to gain conceptual clarity about these different types of collective action from the relevant literature on the subject (such as Rajendra Singh; 2001 : 32-37). Conflicts, as readers can understand, stands out as the central element lying at the core of non-

institutionalised, nonconsensual and conflictual collective action. And these forms of collective action also include the conception of social movements. A brief analytical discussion on the nature and forms of social conflict, therefore, becomes essential.

30.2 Nature of Social Conflict

Social conflict is essentially an inter-actional concept. It presupposes the existence of two or more individuals or groups: castes, communities and classes in a situation of opposing claims and contestation about some issues, goals and objectives. As an adversarial concept, conflict always involves the elements of struggle, strife and active effort of one group to exclude or cancel the claim of another group over some values, object or goal. Conflicts vary from a mild disapproval to a brutal physical assault and killing. At this stage, a few points need to be emphasised. First, the mere existence of conflicts do not presuppose the existence of collective action. And all forms of collective actions do not involve conflicts. Secondly, norm oriented institutionalised collective actions such as efforts of a collectivity to make a festive occasion a success or instances of the collective celebration of ceremony or performance of a ritual are devoid of conflict contents.

As one can easily make out, in the study of non-institutionalised conflictual collective action, one has to exclude personalised types of conflicts such as one often witnesses in his everyday life between parent and child and husband and wife or differences and conflicts between the neighbours. Personalised conflicts do not belong to our field of study. But an outburst of spontaneous or organised protests and violence of one group against the other or against some institution and social practice do. A slogan shouting collectivity of people, marching in protest against the exploitation or against the use of unjust power by a caste, class, gender or institutional authority characterise the nature of collective conflict. Some examples such as the cases of peasant uprisings against the erstwhile class of zamindars in the countryside for ownership and control over land or the sit-in “*dharna*”, protests and strike in the industry by the worker for the demand of increase in wage, bonus and better work conditions, including the demand for the share in the decision making process against the capitalists, can be easily cited. Further, like the above two examples, the case of farmer’s strikes against the state for the demand of cheaper cost of electricity and chemical manure or for the sale of their agricultural produces such as grain and vegetables can also be presented as the examples of collective conflict in society.

Conflicts also manifest when one group of people in order to gain and retain an exclusive possession of values and objects try to cancel out the chances or opportunities of another group in achieving the same values and objectives. The acts of one group to expel and exclude another group from the social values against their wishes always tend to involve conflict. Lewis Coser rightly defines conflict as a “struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals” (1956:8). Conflict is always an adversarial concept involving tussle and tension between at least two groups of people in opposition of each other.

Social conflicts are not homogeneous phenomenon. They tend to fall in different categories and types and assume different forms. Since conflicts lie at the core of conflictual collective actions and their typologies, as we shall see below, they sometimes tend to correspond to the typologies of social movements, it is appropriate that a brief discussion on the typology of social conflicts be presented before we discuss the typology of social movements.

30.3 Types of Social Conflicts

Social movements are expressions of conflicts. Conflict presupposes a clear

definition of the opponent, “*the enemy*” or the adversary. All conflicts, according to Alain Touraine (1985 : 750-80), have (a) organised actors, (b) valued or desired stakes and (c) tussles and competition among the actors to achieve those stakes. Against the background of the structure of the concept of conflict, let us study different types of conflicts. Touraine formulates eight types of social conflicts.

- 1) Competitive pursuit of collective interest: This type of conflict is characterised as the expression of the relationship between the actor's input and output in an organisation, or of their relative deprivation. If the employee of a company invests high or low input and receives high or low reward, there can be four possible combinations: (a) high input low reward, (b) high input high reward, (c) low input low reward, and (d) low input and high reward. The first situation has greatest chance for producing conflict. Industrial unrest, labour strikes and workers movements can be result of the first situation.
- 2) Reconstruction of social and cultural or political identity: In this type of conflict ~~situation the adversary is projected and defined as “they”, the other’ and as ‘foreigner’ or as ‘invader’ rather as class opponent or class enemy. Social world gets divided between the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’.~~ The conflict is generally around the conception of the ‘*defense of the community*’ Many contemporary movements in India, such those of *Shiv Sena* in Maharashtra, and in the recent past, *Jharkhand* in Bihar, *Gorkhaland* in Bengal and *Uttarakhand* in Uttar Pradesh are and have been the expression of this type of conflict . In its uglier expressions, this type of conflict can have a tendency to take the forms of regionalist, linguistic, racist, caste and communal movements. Actors in this type of movement tend to raise slogans relating to the ‘purity’, and ‘moral health’ of society being put in danger by the ‘others, the ‘outsider’. It can produce an ~~intense solidarity among the ‘inside’ members of the ‘brotherhood’ and~~ generate a fierce hatred against the ‘other’ who are generally projected as the ‘corruptors’ and ‘polluters’ of the society. Here the left wing concept of ‘class enemy’ gets replaced by right wing concept of ‘cultural enemy’. In both situations the spirit of science is the causality.
- 3) A political force. This type of conflict generally aim at changing the ‘*rule of the game,*’ and not just the advantage in the given system. Industrial disputes, trade union and worker’s movements generally assume the form of political conflict. Shorter and Tilly in their study of strikes in France (1971) argue that strikes, instead of being the expression of deprivation were reflections of their sharp progress and decline of political influence of the workers union. Sudden change in the structure of power or in its normative bases have a strong tendency to generate this type of conflict.
- 4) The defense of the status and privilege. This type of conflict is illustrated by the attempt of an interest group converting their essentially private selfish interest into public issue. Thus, in its worst expression, one notes that a basically corrupt and essentially dishonest political system often raises the slogan, “nation is in danger” merely to hide their ugliness and divert people’s attention from the declining political ethics and public trust in the system of governance. Its milder manifestations are found in the cases of farmer’s mobilization and teachers struggles. In many cases, farmers movements and teachers struggle instead of defending their income directly, begin proclaiming that agriculture and education be given *national priority* as these are matters of ‘*national importance*’.
- 5) Social control of main cultural pattern. Touraine conceives of the conception of cultural pattern in terms of three constituent elements. (a) *a model of knowledge* , (b) *a type of investment* and (c) *a body of ethical principles* and these three elements in return represent respectively the conceptions of *truth*, *production* and *morality*. These elements are subject

to society's capacity to produce it self. In the large complex societies there is always tussle and conflict between the ruling groups and also between the ruling groups and the masses. The ruling group attempts at identifying itself with the main cultural values of society in order to use those values as weapon of exercising domination over the masses. The masses on the other hand attempt at dislodging the dominant ruling group in order to identify themselves with the same values. This type of tussle between culture and power remains a perpetual social reality in most of the complex and large societies.

- 6) Creation of a new social order. The sharpest example of this type of conflict is found in the cases of the revolutionary overthrow of an entire political system and its method of governance by the masses in order to establish a 'new community' with a ' new political system' and a new 'social order'. Such a collective action involves almost all sections of society in a mass upsurge initiating a vast and radical changes in society and in its method of governance. One of the most important consequences of revolutionary type of collective action is that revolution abolishes all types of social conflicts, and by abolishing conflict, revolution abolishes all possibilities for the emergence of social movements. One can note, that movements are expressions more of democratic open than the totalitarian closed societies. Revolutions kill movements. Revolutionary leaders call for social 'order' as the precondition of development. But generally, the need for 'order' is cleverly manipulated in the defence of the power and privileges of the new political class and 'new leaders' (see Rajendra Singh ; 2001:121) .
- 7) National Conflicts. According to Touraine historical conflicts at their highest level are national conflict. Identity and continuity of a society undergoing the process of development and industrialisation can not be defended by the actors or by their social relations as the nation alone can proclaim identity and control over the changes. 'In all countries, 'states Touraine, 'conflict around control of change is conflict about states (1985 : 758). Here emphasis is the need to separate political system as the representative of social, cultural and economic systems from the state as the main agent of historical transformation among societies.
- 8) Conflict of neo-communitarianism. National conflicts generally show the separation between social and historical conflicts. The negative equivalent of national conflict is neo-communitarian conflict. The neo-cmmunitarian conflict attempt at rejecting the historical transformation which generally come from abroad and tend to erode the traditional values and forms of social organization. It refers to the atavistic, indigenous ideologies and demands and in process assume the forms of restorative-revivalist and sometimes, even fundamentalist inward- oriented conflicts and movement.

30.4 Polymorphy of social movements And the Problem of Classification

Social movement, like social conflicts are not homogeneous phenomenon. We have suggested above, that the elements of conflict lie at the core of social movements. The range and variations in the types of social conflicts are bound consequently, to give rise to different types of social movements in society. Social movements generally emerge as a response to some collectively shared social issues, questions and challenges in a situation of conflict .The nature of social issues and conflicts, in a complex society like India, vary by regions, castes, classes, communities and by territorial groups, like tribes, peasants and urban communities. Readers can easily understand that sea-shore fisherman of Kerala may have type of issues and conflicts entirely different from those of the mountain people of Himalaya in Uttarakhand. Consequently, different types of movements find their expressions in society. The polymorphous nature

of movements need to be made amenable for scientific analysis.

Codification and classification are essential methodological steps undertaken to make a range of complex and widely varied social phenomenon, such as social movements, amenable to scientific inquiry and analysis. Classification of movements into different 'types' are based on the principle of 'resemblance' and 'difference' (see, Durkheim : 1963). In what ways do different movements resemble and differ with each other?. In the study of social movements, the problem of typology has been acute. Suiting the theoretic or ideological preference of the scholar, the same movement, has in the writing of one scholar, been characterized as 'peasant movement' and in the other as sectarian one (for detail, see Rajendra Singh; 1984: 93-95). While it is simple to treat 'tribal uprisings' as 'tribal movements' or women's protests against gender discrimination as 'women's movement', it is far more difficult to separate reformative, restorative and revivalist move movements from other types of social movements, including tribal and women's movements. Readers require for an illustration a case from Kathleen Gough's (1974:94) system of classification and typology of social movements. Taking goal, ideology and method of organization, Gough presented a five-fold typology of peasant movements in India. The five-fold types are:

- 1) restorative rebellion,
- 2) religious movements,
- 3) social banditry,
- 4) terrorist vengeance, and finally,
- 5) mass insurrection.

I have critically examined the limitations of Gough's classification (ibid: 93-9). How could the revolt of raja Chait Singh (1778-81) and Vazier Ali (1799) against the British could be included in the category of 'peasant movements'? Similar problem is noticed in other studies (such as Malavya ; 1956; : 183-4) including those by historians (such as Irfan Habib; 1975 : 36 and S.B Chaudhary; 1957 : 32) who treat the Mutiny of 1857 as the example of 'peasant uprising'. The revolt of the Rajas and Vaziers can not be treated as or equivalent of peasant movements. What is therefore, required is an objective method helpful in developing a workable classification and typology of different types of social movements in India. Before we discuss the theme on the 'types' of movements, it would be beneficial to acquaint the readers the way attempts have been made to formulate a working typology of movements.

Reflection and Action 30.1

Do you know of a social movement which has taken place in your society/ community in the past or present. Give a description of a page on this social movement and in which type of social movement will you place it and why? in another page.

Compare your report with those of others at your Study Center.

30.5 Developing a typology of social movements

Scholars in the field have attempted, on different grounds, at developing a typology of movements. Some illustrative attempts can be described here. As reported by Oommen in his ICSSR's Survey Report of 1969-1979 M.S.A.Rao makes a distinction between three levels of conflicts and social structural changes in society, and correspondingly, arrives at the conception of three types of social movements, namely, *reformist*, *transformative* and *revolutionary* (1985 : 84-85). 'Reform' movements, according to Rao, bring about partial changes in the value-paradigm of society. The 'transformative' usher in middle

level social structural changes. The 'revolutionary' movements, on the other hand, bring about radical changes in the totality of social and cultural systems of society. Ghanshyam Shah, on the basis of the socio-economic characteristics of the participants and the nature of social issues involved, presents eight types of social movements in India (1990:27) These types are: (1).Peasant movements, (2).Tribal movements, (3).Dalit movements, (4).Backward caste movements, (5).Women's movements, (6) Students movements, (7). Middle class movements, and finally, (8).Industrial working class movements. T.K. Oommen offers threefold classification of movements. His classificatory schema is based on the way society responds to the situations of social strains (1985:86-87). Oommen's analysis reflects some degree of methodological realism when he observes that, "None of the attempts made so far is comprehensive enough to encapsulate all varieties of movements found in India" (ibid). It need to be realised that all topologies and classifications are provisional and tentative in nature. In fact, there exists an underlying hypothesis or a theory in light of which grounds of classifications is decided. **Typologies and classifications are tools to help meeting the theoretical requirements of a particular study at hand and to illuminate the nature of empirical realities.**

Rajendra Singh, (1984:93) in his endeavor to develop a relatively more dependable model of classification of social movements into different types has developed a set of three inter-related indicators or questions. These are as presented below:

- a) What were or are the foci of the movements?. The answer of this question would require identifying the axial or central issue at the stake of the movement. It would generally refers to the aims, objective or issues involved in the movement such as those relating to forest and tribes, land and its produce, communal, gender, religious, ecology and environment , industrial workers etc; around which a protesting or angry collectivity of men and women comes into being.
- b) Who are the people who are participating in the movement ?.This question relates to the structure of membership of the people and to their participation in the movement .The identity of the participants belonging to a specific section of society: class, caste, gender or religion or even a region who rise to share the foci or the objectives (a above) of the mobilised collectivity and decide to 'swim or sink together', helps in narrowing down the process of classification to locating a more dependable specific 'type' of movement. And finally,
- c) What is the nature of the adversary group or institution or social practice against whom (which) the movement is launched .The identification of the target group or the 'enemies' of the people, caste, community, gender etc; of the movement

The three indicators, 'Who' 'What' for and against 'Whom', constitute a triangular paradigm of classification of movements into different 'types' such as *peasant ,tribal, dalit, women's , ecology , workers , sub-nationalist* etc;. However, the above classificatory model has also to take into account the changing nature of the contemporary Indian society. In the contemporary setting, India's social and economic character seems to be defined by its movement from an incomplete and *immature modernity* and development to an equally incomplete and *immature post- modernity* (see, Rajendra Singh; 2001:16-8, 43-70). The mutually odd combination of these two types of movements tend to characterize the historico-specific representation of the Indian society. By the phrase 'representation' of society we mean, "...the system of people's ideologies, ideas and concepts; their myths, legends and history; their conception of past, present and future; their defeats, successes, aspirations and struggles"(ibid; 44). There has been discussions on different types of movements such as *old movements, alternative movements classical*

movements, new movements, micro-movements, , proto-movements (ibid; 20) or even as Touraine conceptualizes ‘ *beyond social movements* ’ (Touraine ; 1992). Before we elaborate on the typologies of movements, it is appropriate that a brief discussion on the conception of social movement be presented at this juncture.

It may be realised that social movements are not ‘made. It can not be artificially invented. Movements are always the natural expression of the conflictual contents of society that lie at the core of its structure. The very making of society and social structure; the process of stratification of population into unequal stratum: castes, class and occupational groups are based essentially on the principle of in equality. The distribution of social values such as material resources, power, prestige, honour etc; carry the natural condition of conflicts in them The birth of rich and poor, weak and strong, powerful and powerless, the dominant and the dominated in society are the perennial and inescapable social realities conducive to producing relative social deprivation, conflict and opposition among different groups and segments in society. It has been mentioned somewhere that “Movements are not made; much less they are launched or led by leaders. Whenever opportunities permit or human disenchantments exhaust the limit of human perseverance, movements decoil (unfold) automatically and reveal themselves in the actions of the awakened conflictual consciousness of the collectivity. (Rajendra Singh ; 2001: 20) . In the light of the above observations, one can easily identify some of the ‘normal types’ of social movements. These are: universalism, relativism, social optimism and the idea of self-renewal and self-actualisation. (see for detail, Rajendra Singh ; ibid : 40-41).

Reflection and Action 30.2

You all may have read about the 1857 uprising of Indians against the Colonial rulers. Try to gather more information about this uprising from history text books.

Analyse the different aspects of this uprising and state what type of a social movement it was and why?

Compare your answer with those of other students at your Study Center. You may ask your Academic Counsellor to explain this topic in the context of the ‘uprising’ as a social movement.

30.6 Old and New Types of movements

The plural and transforming nature of social conflicts in the contemporary India, the claims and contestations of different collectivities; the types of stake they articulate and the nature of the method and style of their mobilisation suggest of two major typological orientations in the themes on movement studies. These orientations help us in identifying the different types of social movements in India. The traditions of movement studies in India have been broadly divided into themes of:

- 1) *the classical tradition*,
- 2) *the neo-classical* tradition and finally,
- 3) into the contemporary ‘*new*’ social movement (hereafter referred to as NSMs) study tradition (Rajendra Singh; 2002 : 89).

However, by far the most popular and currently widely used classification of themes of movements in types, are those of **Old** and **New** social movements. The first, refers to the conventional ‘old’ themes of *peasant, tribe and industrial worker* and other movements. It may be understood, that these old themes, as we shall note bellow, some times continue to persist as the main concern of a number of studies on social movement in India. The second orientation

however, reveals the emergence of new types of movements such as, for example, those on the issues of *identity, environment* and collective mobilisations of people on the questions relating to *gender and social justice* etc.; Some times these two themes tend to overlap upon each other, blurring the line of their mutual separation.

It may be pointed out that the articulation of the conception of *the classical* 'old' and NSMs are found in the writings of a large number of European and American scholars (such as Tilly et al 1975, Tilly ; 1978, 1985, Melucci ; 1980, 1981, 1985, Habermas ; 1981 and 1985, Jean Cohen ; 1982 and 1985 , Arato and Jean Cohen ; 1984, Eyerman ; 1984, Eder; 1985, Offe; 1985, Touraine; 1985, Eyerman and Jamison1991; and Frank and Fuente ; 1987, etc;). Indian and other Asian scholars (such as Omvedt ; 1988, 1989, 1993 ; Rajendra Singh ; 191995, 2000 ; Ramachandra Guha1989 and Wignaraja ; 1993) have already initiated theoretical discussions and field reporting on the questions on relating to the conceptions of 'old' and 'new' social movements.

The classical tradition mostly include the contributions of western social psychologists, such as, G. Tarde's *Law of Imitation* (1903),Gustave Lebon's *The Crowd* (1909), William McDougall's *The Group Mind* (1920) and E. D. Martin's *The Behaviour of Crowd* (cited in Smelser; 19 62 : 20) on the collective behaviour of crowd and riotous mob. These studies did help in laying down of the tradition of collective behaviour studies in social sciences. One may also include William Trotter's study of *Animal behaviour in Peace and War* (1920) which analyses the behaviour of animal in extreme situations. Trotter's study provided a powerful paradigm for similar study of stress and its impact on human behaviour to social science studies on collective behaviour. (b) *The neo- classical* tradition is generally reflected in social movement studies based on the (i) functionalist and (ii) Marxist theoretical models (see, Rajendra Singh ; 2001 : 156-158, 171-174). (i) The functionalist model treats society as an organised 'whole', consisting of interdependent parts or constituent units; the 'whole' is based on value consensus and it has an ability to resolve the problems of *deviance, conflicts, protests and oppositions* by producing appropriate *adjustive-adoptive* and *conflict- resolving* social responses (Berghe ; 1969 : 302-305). The functionalist model had, it seem, a strong organismic root. Walter B. Connan's powerful book, *The Wisdom of Body* (1932) provided a strong analogical base bestowing upon society an inherent restorative ability somewhat akin to the self-healing ability of human body. (ii) The Marxist model is based on a set of conceptions about the idea of *materialistic* conception of *social classes, dialectics as philosophy and methodology in social sciences, mode of production and class formation, class dialectics, classes and social structure, materialistic conception of history and class transformation and materialistic determinism of history, knowledge and human symbolic expressions including human consciousness etc;* and finally, (d) the contemporary or 'new' social movement tradition. In developing the typologies of traditions in the social movements themes into 'old' and 'new' types, we, on various grounds, include the classical and neo-classical studies into the broad category of '**old**' and the contemporary themes, in the category of the '**new**' types of social movement study tradition. Each of the above two major types of movements are further divided into **sub-types**. The sub-types of the 'old' movements are divided in the following traditions: (a) Peasant movements and agrarian struggles; (b) Post-history and peasant consciousness, subaltern studies , (c) Tribal movements , (d) Workers movements (see Rajendra Singh ; 2001 :227). We are going to present first, the social characteristics of 'old' social movements. It will be followed by the characterisation of the 'new' social movements, bellow.

a) **Social characteristics of 'old' social movements and their sub-types**

- 1) Old or classical social movements have generally been defined by their *class contents*. It has been treated as the child of three major socio-

economic characteristics the contemporary world, namely *capitalism, industrialism and materialism*. Readers may find discussions on these concept in publications (such as Rajendra Singh ; 2001:44-50). Old social movements are therefore, mostly '*class-bound*' movement. The term 'class' is required to be explained. Omvedt insists that the concept of class need to be defined in terms of social Marxist concept of *relations of production* (see for detail, Omvdt; 1982:13) Reduced to its simplest meaning, the term 'class' refers to (a).the division of population into unequal groups; (b). inequality among the groups emerge because of differential distribution of economic resources; (c) a minority group happens to get more share in the ownership and control over the economic resources than it actually requires; others; the majority groups, consequently, gets less than what they actually need; (d) this faulty system of the distribution of economic resources or property gives birth to 'the rich' and 'the poor' or the bourgeoisie and the proletariats classes in society, (e) the poor on account of 'being on the same boat' develop a sense of class unity among themselves and enter into an antagonistic relationship with the class located above them. This antagonistic relationship between the rich and the poor, in course of their dialectical relationship gives rise to what Marxist scholars refer to a 'class struggle'. Most of the studies on peasants and peasant movements (such as, Dhanagare; 1983, Oommen; 1990, Omvedt; 1982 etc;) or those on trade unionism and the working class movements (such as, Giri; 1958, Mathur; 1964, Karnik; 1978 etc) are some of the examples of old movement studies based on class model .

- 2) The class based old social movements tend to have a strong ideological grounding in the conception of 'class struggle', 'class revolution' and in the overthrow of the entire political system of governance and re-establishment of a new social order. Many 'old' social movement studies of Marxist theoretical orientation (such as, Sundaryya ; 1972, Sunil Sen;1982, Mitter; 1977, P.N. Mukherji; 1980 and 197 etc;) envision a radical recasting of society . Phrases such as ' peasant war' (wolf; 1971) or 'agrarian struggle' Desai;1986) have been in usage to orchestrate the revolutionary ethos of the Marxist construction of peasant conflict in the countryside . The role of violence in such types of collective mobilisations are not ruled out as all revolutionary struggles have witnessed the use of violence in wide scale in the name of ' cleaning the system' or 'the 'purging' of the corrupt from the society.
- 3) In the case of old social movements, it may be noted that the adversaries are easily identifiable social groups- a caste or a class. The peasant uprisings in the region of Avadh and eastern districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh (see, M.H Siddiqi; 1978, Rajendra Singh; 1984 respectively) have had a clear image and known identity of the opponent. The category of the rural dominant, then (that is, the abolition of talukdari and zamindari system in 1952, in Uttar Pradesh) who generally belonged to the classes of talukdar and in Avadh and the Zamindars in the zamindari region of East U.P. respectively were clearly identifiable group of rural population. Restive and insurgents; the tenants could name them, blame them and hold them responsible for their misery and the life of subjugation and wretchedness. It were their victimisation at the hands of the local landlords that forced the peasants ultimately to get organised and rise to voice their resentments through collective struggle. Like-wise, the opponents in Shiv Sena movement in the state of Maharashtra, or tribal's uprisings in Jharkhand region, now in the state of Chhattisgarh, have had a clear picture of the Dikhu- the "outsiders" who were held responsible for the tribals exploitation and social miseries. In addition, it can also be pointed out that the opponents or the target of the movements, in most of the cases are or were located in the same locality or region, such were the

situations in the cases of peasants uprisings against the zamindars and talukdars residing in the villages along with the peasants (ibid, Siddiqi; 1978, Rajendra Singh ; 1984).

- 4) And finally, The mass society conception of movements generally reflected in the writings of scholars such as (Lederer; 1940, Arendt; 1951, Kornhauser;1960). Their attempt at presenting a social diagnosis of the contemporary societies present a pessimistic picture of people's place in society. They emphasise on the growing process of social alienation, anomie and the fragmentation of social world one lives in. The image of the modern mass society is characterised by the increasing sense of social rootlessness, facelessness and powerlessness. The individual finds himself in a highly bureaucratised and mechanical social world, finding it difficult as how to orient his relation towards others in different social situations. There is a sense of loss of direction. The dissolution of normative bases of social anticipations expectation produce atomised mass society.

b) Social Characteristics of New Social Movements and their Sub-Types

New NSMs are the reflections of a new 'representation of society characterised by post-capitalism, post- industrialism and post-materialism. In the 1960's and 1970's European and American societies gave rise to large-scale movements around issues and questions which were non-materialistic in nature. These movements generally raised questions which were basically cultural and humanistic. Unlike the region or locality bound old types of social movements, the new movements espouse the goals, objective and values of universalistic application. Their objectives are to defend the essence of the mankind and protect the conditions on which human life depends on .The ideological discourse of the 'new' movements centre around the question of identity, human dignity, peace and social justice. There has been a radical shift from the discussions on capitalism 'class exploitation', class revolution etc;' to the questions of the expanding nature of state power and the shrinking space of the citizen and the civil society. In these new movements, at the stakes are the problems of individual freedom, personal liberty, identity and social equality. These mobilisations did not carry with them the questions of 'employment' 'wage', 'bonus' and economic security as it used to be in the industrial sector or the question of 'land' and 'share' in land produce' as one used to notice in the cases of peasant movements in the countryside. The NSMs can be divided into two sub types.

The ethos of NSMs germinated in India during the Freedom Struggle movement back in the 1920's and 1930's or even earlier .The emphasis on *Swadeshi* (indigenous), village handicraft, self-help, native small scale industries and boycott of foreign goods as weapon to defend the self-identity and to fight against the British colonialism in India , was a part of emancipatory ideology of the Indian National Congress as far back as 1906-10 (Sitaramyia; 1941, 85) The appearance of Mahatma Gandhi on the scene was an epochal event in the long history of India. Mahatma's insistence on *ahimsa* (non-violence), *stayagraha* (insistence on truth), *civil disobedience*, *non-cooperation*, *local-self government* and the call for the restoration of *village panchayats* (ibid; 84, 135,140-41, 160, 195-96, 202-3, 215-216) and on the *spinning wheel and khadi* (charkha and home spun cloth) for winning *swaraj* (independence), self-reliance and social reconstruction of the Indian society was indeed one of the most successful post- industrialist and post-modernist expression of new social movement in the human history. The *bhoodan-gramdan* (Oommen;1972) and *sarvodaya* (Radhakrishna;1987) movements are the example par-excellence of the new social movements in Indian. The contemporary NSMs mirror the image of a new society in the process of its self-making. These movements project a new self-consciousness among the individual and communities about not only their culture and society but also about their future. And in this, the NSMs can be treated as the reflection of the cultural revolt of the contemporary

individual against the exercise of increasing surveillance and control of the state over the civil society on the one hand and on the other hand growing realisation and self- confidence of the civil society that (a) it ought not to place the destiny and future of the mankind in the hands of the state alone; it must remain vigilant against the unwisdom of the state and the political system and; (b) that society has an agency and that it can alter the path of its movements and transformation. The NSMs are divided in (1) **Inclusivist type** of movements, and (2) **Exclusivist type** of movements. For the detail references, discussion and analysis of themes of these types of movements, discussed bellow, the readers are advised to check the relevant literature contained in books (such as Rajendra Singh ; 2001 :88-104, 227-298)

- 1) **The Inclusivist New movements:** The inclusivist movements actively articulate generally universalised, non-violent and mostly pacifist, pan-humanist homophilic values. In India, the NSM of inclusivist type found its

early expressions in the bhoodan-gramdan and sarvodaya movements. In the contemporary setting, the manifestations of inclusivist movements are seen in the forms of mobilisations in the defence of ecology and environment. These movements also find their manifestations in the collective struggles for identity, equality, personal dignity and social justice.

Readers may note, that most of the collective protest and mobilisations of women and the Dalits in India belong to this type of inclusivist movements. Farmer's movements fighting the state for fair price of their agricultural produce, cheaper rate of the cost of chemical manure and more reasonable cost of electrical power deal also belong to this type of movement. What is important to note is that these movements are non-

political and they do not question the legitimacy of the state. With some degree of variations, most of the NSMs aim at connecting the centres of power with the grassroots localities. As we have suggested earlier NSMs are mostly non-violent in their expressions. However, there can be exceptions. Dalit struggles and mobilisations, mainly an identity-oriented collective protest, some time, may give expressions to caste violence. Movements relating to peace, disarmament, human rights and personal liberty are inclusivist type of NSMs.

Most of the NSMs struggle for social reconstruction of society, ensure equality and social justice for all. They also aim at resolving the social structural anomalies of society- such as discrimination of the human on the basis of caste, community, region and race. These movements are non-radical, non-separatist and non-autonomist. Inclusivist types of movements high light the internal and external structural tensions of the contemporary society, now loudly defined *by market, technology, communication and democratic* upsurge at a global level. The NSMs symbolize cultural pluralism, polymorphy of new types of social conflicts and increasing emphasis on the democratization of all aspects of society.

- 2) **TheExclusivist movements:** The exclusivist movements generally develop the conception of the 'other' and hold them responsible for their miseries. These movements, instead of integrating the members of the community in socially cohesive 'whole' split the population in 'we' and 'they'. The conception of the 'outsiders' is one of the dominant characterizing element of exclusivist type of movements. In India, the exclusivist type of NSMs find their manifestation in the narrowly defined mobilisation of *subnationalism, community divides and ethnic* demands. The'son of the soil' paradigm of *subnationalist* and *semi-autonomist* movements belong to exclusivist type of movements. The exclusivist movements, in many cases, articulate demands for socio-spatial enclave with some degree of socio-economic and political autonomy. Most of the exclusivist movements generally give a call to the community to rise in defense of their social,

economic and cultural identity. The mobilising slogan is that the 'purity' and the symbol of their cultural essence and heritage are in danger; requires sacrifice in terms of money, efforts and struggles. The nearest example of the exclusivist movements are the subnationalist mobilisation in the state of Assam with a slogan that, '*Assam is for the Assamese*'. In the recent past, the call for *Gorkhaland* and *Uttarakhand* in north India illustrate the character of exclusivist movements. Further, the regionalist movements of the mainly tribal population of the state of Bihar, in the near past, for Jharkhand state essentially because it has dominantly tribal character, mentioned above in the section on 'old' social movements show the elements of exclusivist NSM. The radical and ultra-radical exclusivist movement some times tend to assume fundamentalist character. The violent struggle for the 'homeland' in Shri Lanka and the fundamentalist struggles with religious orientation being witnessed in some parts of West Asia are wholly in contrast to the homophilic, pan-humanist with universalised goals and values of the inclusivist movements. However, it must be noted that whether NSMs are inclusivist or exclusivist, they are non-class, non- materialistic and mostly non-political movements.

In the light of the above discussion, we are going to identify some of the ideal-typical characteristics of the NSM bellow.

c) **The ideal-typical character of the NSMs**

- 1) Most of the NSMs base their ideological conceptions by imputing a duality between the state and the civil society. The assumption is that the social space of the civil society getting increasingly shrunk the "social" of the civil society is being systematically eroded by the penetration of the expanding tentacles of power and control in almost every aspect of life. What more is disturbing the reality is that the expansion of the state coincide with and overlap upon the process of the expansion of market. The institutions of state and the market grip the civil society so tenaciously that society is rendered helpless in their combined pressure of surveillance and control. NSMS therefore, emerge in the 'self-defense' of the community. The state, in the name of the 'public' interests attempt making encroachment at almost every aspects of the 'private' lives of the individual (see Rajendra Singh ; 2001 : 99). Its perhaps on account of the all-round attack of the state and the market on the civil society tha diverse forms and types of NSMs : urban, ecological, anti-authoritarin, anti-institutionalists, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic and regionalist have sprung up in the contemporary society. The site of the struggle have shifted from the traditional workplace of industries and factories, and field and farms. The basic agenda of the NSM is to establish a post-bourgeois, post-industrial, post-materialist democratic civil society. Such an agenda is, indeed, a new phenomenon in the contemporary the post-modern world.
- 2) The NSM radically alter the Marxist paradigm of explaining all forms of social conflict and contradictions in terms of class and class conflicts, a point we have suggested earlier. The Marxist system of the explanation of movements and change in society could not account for the issues emerging from the questions relating to ecology and environment, gender, race, ethnicity etc; Marxism treated all forms of struggles as class struggle and all forms of social conflicts as class conflicts. It went far beyond to assert that human cognition and the consciousness is fashioned by the material forces and conditions of society. Further, it went to treated all forms of social groupings and organisation as class grouping and class organisation. It may be realised that many types of contemporary struggles, such as those of anti-racism, disarmament. Feminist and environmentalist movements are not class struggle, nor do they reflect movements of classes. The groupings in the above movements are not class grouping –

they often go beyond class confines. Marxism as a method and a general theory of explanation in social sciences is in shambles; at the face of the new social reality, it has totally collapsed both as philosophy as well as methodology of science. Marxism saw all forms of conflict located in the class structure of society. In the contemporary setting of societies conflicts spill over space wider than the space of classes and often crossing over the boundaries of a nation and society. Contemporary movements are trans-cultural, trans-national and trans-political systems of societies. NSMs raise questions and issues of universal nature, relating to future of the humankind. Their goals and values are global and overarching the width of mankind. Their agenda include issues relating to disarmament, peace, nuclear pollution and nuclear war; issues regarding the defence of the planet (the earth), ecology, environment and human right .The ideological paradigm of the NSMs go beyond the confines of materialistic determinism and successfully overcome the inabilities of Marxism.

- 3) With the collapse of Marxism, it became evident that the class background does neither determine the identity of the actor nor define the nature of its stakes. Therefore the NSMs generally abandon the industrial worker model of union organisation as well as the political model of political parties. With the exception of the German Green and the Green Party, most of the NSMs evolve grass-root politics , initiate grass-root actions , micro-movements participated by small groups and struggle for localised issues and questions with small institutional base. The new movements generally, produce horizontally organised democratic associations, “ that are loosely federated at the national level (Jean Cohen; 1985 : 667) According to Cohen the NSMs target the social domain of the civil society rather than launching an attack on the economy and the state (ibid).The chief social characteristics of the NSMs are seen in its self-limiting nature. According to Cohen, (ibid ;1985 : 679) they are self-limiting in four senses as presented below.
 - a) Generally, the actor in NSM's do not struggle for the return of the utopian undifferentiated communities of the past,
 - b) The actors struggle for the autonomy, plurality and difference, without rejecting the egalitarian principles of democracy, parliament, political participation and public representation of its juridical structures,
 - c) The actors make a conscious efforts to learn from their past experiences, to relativise their values through reasoning, except in the cases of the fundamentalist expressions of the NSMs, and finally,
 - d) The actors in the NSM's accept the legitimacy of the state and the formal existence of the market.

30.7 Conclusion

We have tried to identify social movements as a specific form of conflictual collective action. The structure of conflict and their typology suggesting their linkage, in some cases, with the different forms of movements have been discussed and highlighted in some detail. There has been an attempt to convey to the readers that the nature and types of social movements are related to the nature of the 'representation' of society. The 'representation' of society defined mainly by capitalism, industrialism, materialism and modernism generally gave rise to 'classical', 'neo-classical' or **old** social movements. The transformation of society from capitalism, industrialism, materialism and modernism to post-capitalism, post-industrialism, post-materialism and post-modernism gave rise to an altogether new forms of collective action, we refer to them as NSMs. Social movements, at this juncture get divided in two different types, namely, **the old** and **the new** social movements. The new social movement went under further sub-division into different sub-types.

The major sub-types have been those of **Exclusivist and Inclusivist** types of NSMs. Each of these two major sub-types of the NSMs is divided into separate types.

It may be remembered, that no system of classification is complete and perfect. The relevance of classification is defined by their ability to and effectiveness in simplifying social reality and help rendering their explanation. The application of the classificatory principle of 'resemblance' and 'difference' has to be carried on with caution keeping in mind the nature of social reality one is classifying.

30.8 Further Reading

- 1) Rao, M.S.A. 1984. (edit) *Social Movements in India*. Manohar Publications. New Delhi.
- 2) Desai, A.R. *Peasant. 1979. Struggle in India*. (edit.). Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
- 3) Singh, Rajendra, 2001. *Social Movements, Old and New: A Post-Modernist Critique*. Sage Publications. New Delhi.



Unit 31

Peasants Movements

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31.1 Introduction

The central concern of this unit is to examine the various dimensions of the peasant movements. This unit is presented within the conceptual framework of social movements and collective identity formation. It begins with a conceptual discussion on peasants and peasant movements. It also briefly deals with the social background of the emergence and the processes of manifestations of the radical peasant movements. The transformation of peasant movements from the phase of the radical to the reformatory of these peasant movements and the various dimension of this transformation are also discussed in this unit.

31.2 Conceptualizing Peasants and Peasant Movements

Let us begin with some conceptual clarifications. In this section we shall be discussing the concept of peasants, peasant caste interface and peasant movements.

a) Peasants

Historically peasants have had paradoxical social identities. In social science literature they have been depicted on the one hand as reactionary, conservative, awkward, homologous, incomplete-part society and dependent, on the other as revolutionary, progressive, self-conscious, heterogeneous and self-sufficient social category with the potential for autonomous collective action. However, notwithstanding such paradoxes, social scientists have broadly underlined the subordinated, marginalized and underdog position of the peasantry in human society. In the sociological and the anthropological literature peasants have widely been described as *culturally* 'unsystematic, concrete tradition of many, unreflective, unsophisticated and the non-literati constituting the mosaic of the "little tradition" (Redfield 1956), 'incomplete' and a 'part society with part cultures' (Kroeber 1948). *Politically* they are found to occupy an 'underdog position and are subjected to the domination by outsiders (Shanin 1984), unorganized and deprived of the knowledge required for organised collective action (Wolf 1984: 264-65). In the *economic term*, they are identified to be the small producers for their own consumption (Redfield 1956), subsistence cultivators (Firth 1946) who produce predominantly for the need of the family rather than to make a profit (Chayanov 1966). *Historically*, peasants have always borne the brunt of the extreme forms of subordination and oppression in society. However the specific socio-economic conditions of their existence

have largely shaped the roles of the peasantry in social change and transformation.

In the context of the 18th century peasantry in France Karl Marx highlighted that their mode of production had isolated them from one another. To him, 'they are formed by simple addition of homologous magnitude, such as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes' (Marx 1974:231). To Lenin, however, the peasantry in late 19th- and early 20th-century Russia was differentiated by the unequal patterns of landholding, income and by their contact with the market as well. To him, there was a striking difference between the working peasant and the peasant profiteers. While the former was a faithful ally of the working class, the later was an ally of the capitalist (Lenin, 1919rpt, 1972:497-498). On the other hand Kautsky has highlighted the process of the dissolution of self-sufficient peasant households in the wake of penetration of capitalist urban industry, increasing rural and urban divide and the growing indebtedness and landlessness of the peasantry in Russia (Kautsky 1899 rpt.1988). Antonio Gramsci has seen the peasantry in the context of Italy as a part of a larger socio-political order and not a discrete entity. Having understood the nature of peasantry's subordination, Gramsci highlighted that their subordination could be broken through the alliance of workers and peasants and through the development of class-consciousness among the peasants (cf. Arnold 1984: 161-62). Frantz Fanon while studying the peasantry in the context of Algeria, points out that in colonial countries they play a revolutionary role in bringing about change in the social and political order of society. To him, peasants are posited to a situation where 'they have nothing to lose and everything to gain' by way of their participation in the change (Fanon 1971: 47). Alavi highlights the crucial roles played by the middle peasantry in the Russian and Chinese revolutions (Alavi 1965). However in his observation on the peasantry in South Asia, he points out that peasant 'finally and irrevocably takes the road to revolution only when he is shown in practice that the power of his master can be irrevocably broken; then the alternative mode of existence becomes real to him (Alavi 1973: 333-34). Barrington Moore while recognizing the revolutionary role of the peasantry in the radical movements, points out that such roles are dependent on the structure of power and the class alignments within a society. Turning to India, he mentions that because of the passive character of the Indian peasantry and the specific structural features of Indian society, which is dominated by caste, religion and ethnic considerations, peasantry has not been able to play any revolutionary role in the country (1966).

b) Peasants Caste Interface in India

Peasants in India represent a vast mass landless agricultural labourer, sharecroppers, tenants, poor artisans and small and marginal cultivators having a close social interface with the socially deprived, like the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, other backward classes and women. The so-called 'outcastes' of the *Varna* hierarchy in the real sense of the term form the core of the peasantry in rural India. In the localized vocabulary peasants are denoted by the usage like *kisan*, *krishak*, *roytu*, *chashi*, etc. more or less indicating cultivators who cultivate land with their own labour, and also the categories, namely, *adhiaar* and *bhagchashi* (sharecropper and tenant) and *majdoor*, *majur*, *collie*, *pait*, *krishi shramik*, etc. agricultural labourers. These terms signify specific cultural connotations, which are more often than not used to indicate the marginalized and inferior status of these categories in the agrarian society as against the superior categories like *bhuswami*, *malik*, *jotedar*, *bhadralok*, etc., whose major source of earning is from the land, but without getting manually involved in the process of cultivation. Thus peasants are a socially and economically marginalised, culturally subjugated and politically dis-empowered social groups who are attached to land to eke out a subsistence living.

The peasant societies in India have widely been affected by the broad process of social transformation caused by the introduction of land reforms, rural development initiatives and new agricultural technology and the rejuvenation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. However, studies conducted in several parts of the country (SinghaRoy 1992, 1995; Rogaly 1999; Mukherjee and Chattopadhyay 1981; Byres 1981 and many others) show that such changes have only partially altered the core issue of livelihood security of the peasantry who have still remained economically marginalized, predominantly becoming either landless, semi-landless, marginal or small cultivators without possessing advanced means of cultivation. The age-old association between this lowest ritual status and low economic position has always provided a basis for their socio-economic marginalization, political dis-empowerment and collective mobilization in the peasant movements and in various struggles against their oppression in society

c) Peasant Movements

An important dimension of a social movement is its life history and the process of transformation it undergoes. The movement may emerge to be routinized accompanying a decline in support for the movement. The movement may also acquire a reformative character. In Indian context there has been the processes of transformation of social movements from that of the intensive phase of radical action to institutionalization (SinghaRoy 1992, Oommen 1984).

Peasant movements are important variants of social movements(Dhangare 1983). These movement can be categorized in terms of their ideological orientation, forms of grassroots mobilization, and orientation towards change as ‘radical’ and ‘institutionalised’ to analyze their dynamics. A ‘radical peasant movement’ is viewed as a non-institutionalized large-scale collective mobilization initiated and guided by radical ideology for rapid structural change in peasant society. A ‘institutionalised’ peasant movement’, on the other hand, is one where institutionalized mass mobilization is initiated by recognized bodies for a gradual change in the selected institutional arrangement of society. It has been observed that peasant movements, however, are not discretely radical or reformative, rather one may be an extension of another through transition over a period of time (SinghaRoy 1992: 27), that the process of mobilization and institutionalization do coexist and that institutionalization provides the new possibilities of mobilization (Oommen 1984: 251) and that the process of transformation of these movements from ‘radical’ to ‘institutionalised’ directly affects the process of new collective identity formation of the peasantry.

31.3 Peasants Identity in Revolutionary Movements

Social isolation, cultural segregation and economic exploitation have accentuated the historical processes of marginalisation and political subordination of the peasants. The collective realizations and awareness of the peasants on these issues have resulted into the outbreak of various historical peasants’ movements in the world. Wolf highlighted several historical revolutions and political upheavals, fought with peasant support, that have shaken the world of twentieth century. To him, peasants participated in the great rebellions because of the suffering caused by the demographic crisis, ecological crisis and the crisis in power and authority. As the poor peasants depend on the landlord for their livelihood they are ‘unlikely to pursue the course of rebellion unless they are able to rely on some external power to challenge the power which constrains them’. To him there are two components of the peasantry, which possess sufficient internal leverage to enter into sustained rebellion: “landowning middle peasantry; a peasantry located in a peripheral area outside the domains of landlord control.” He also points out that the ‘peasant rebellions of the 20th century are no longer simple response to local problems, if indeed they ever were. They are but parochial reactions

to major social dislocations set in motion by overwhelming societal changes” (Wolf, 1984: 269-271).

~~What have been the nature of political identity and action of the peasantry~~ in the peasant movements? Shanin points out that in history the peasantry many time has acted politically as a “class like” social entity. ‘Their common interests have driven the peasants into political conflict with large capitalist landowners, with various groups of town men and with the modern state’. To him, in a modern society its character as a social entity determines the patterns of peasant’s political action and influence. He identified three main types of these actions: **independent class action** (as formulated in the Marxian class analysis; **guided political action** (in which the peasantry is moved by an external uniting power elite); and the **fully autonomous, amorphous political actions** in the form of: *local riots* and *passive resistance* of the peasant (Shanin, 1984: 256-58)

To Shanin, army and guerilla action plays a crucial role in the political life of the peasants. These actions represent the peasantry as ‘class-for-itself.’ Such actions according to him enhance the potential of the peasant to act politically and to think nationally. ‘The professional rebels, national wide ideological and organizational cohesion, their stability and zeal and their ability to work out a long term strategy may enable them to unite the peasantry, sometimes transforming its revolt into a successful revolution (Ibid. 261).

Alavi (1971) highlights the crucial roles played by the middle peasantry in the revolutions of Russia and China. To him, it is the middle peasantry, and not the small peasantry, who gave the major stimulation to peasant rebellions. Barrington Moore (1966) while recognised the revolutionary role of the peasantry in the radical movements, points out that such roles are dependent on the structure of power and the class alignments in the society. Turning to India, he mentions that because of the passive character of the Indian peasantry and the specific structural features of India society which are dominated by caste, religion, and the ethnic considerations peasantry has not been able to play any revolutionary role.

(Revolutionary Role in India Freedom Movement)

31.4 Radical Peasant Movement in India

To highlight the diversified facets of the peasant movements we shall discuss some aspects of the peasant movements in India, since India has been the hotbed of several peasant movements. Peasant movements, however, are not episodic. These undergo a process of transformation along with the broad social, economic and political transformation of the society. Many of these peasant movements have retained their continuity with the past, by maintaining legacy of the celebrated peasant movements in one way or the other. However, the contemporary peasant movements have undergone substantial changes in the ideological orientation, leadership, organisation, and significantly in the forms of collective mobilisation and the tactical line of action. All these have affected the process of gross-root mobilization, process of new identity formation and transformation of radical peasant movements into an institutionalized one. Peasant movements, however, are not discretely radical or reformative, rather one may be an extension of another though transition over a period of time (SinghaRoy 1992: 27) The process of transformation of the peasant movement from ‘radical’ to ‘reformative’ directly affect the process of new collective identity formation of peasantry. Is the process of new identity formation of the peasantry autonomous of the issues, aims and ideology of a given social movement? Do they acquire an autonomous identity in the process of transformation of the movement from radicalization to institutionalization?

The process of transformation of the peasant has affected not only the form and extent of their participation in these movements, but also the very essence of their collective identity formation, the nature of the autonomy of these mobilizations and the new identity formed therein. However, the direction of transformation of the peasant movement and their consequent implication for the peasantry has not been the same across the country because of the diverse patterns of economic development and social and political formations in the peasant societies.

Since the middle of the last century the peasant societies of Indian experienced three vehement peasant movement. The poor peasantry of undivided Bengal revolted for the peasant societies of Indian experienced three vehement peasant movement: The poor peasantry of undivided Bengal revolted for Tebhaga (two-third of the share of the produce from land) 1946-47. Peasantry of the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh revolted against the landlords, moneylenders and the state for the abolition of forced labour, forced collection of high rate of interest and for their indignity in the society in 1948-52; and the peasantry of Naxalbari of the West Bengal revolted against the local landlords money lenders and the state in (1967-71).

Though the Tebhaga, Telangana and the Naxalite movements took place in different geographical places and in different period of time, there are some striking similarities among these movements:

- a) Increasing landlessness, poverty, under employment and various types of social and economic deprivation of the backward classes Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and their exploitation by the upper caste landowners and money lenders were the major issues involved in this movement
- b) All these movements were organised under the auspice of the organisation and leadership of the Communists(of different political establishments)
- c) All these movements were ideologically radical in nature. These movements challenged the normative and the pre-existing institutional arrangements of the society.
- d) Uninstitutionalised collective mobilization and action were sponsored in these movements.
- e) These movements were immediately directed against the traditional landlords, police administration and other apparatus of the state
- f) These movements looked for a radical change in the pre-existing agrarian arrangements of the society
- g) Though the leadership of these movements came mostly from the urban intellectuals and the higher caste groups, the poor peasantry especially from the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, were the main driving forces in these collective mobilizations
- h) All these movements experienced the phenomenal participation of women in all phases of progression of the collective mobilization; and exploitation of women by the upper caste landowners had become a prominent issue in these movements.

31.5 The Tebhaga Movement (1946-47)

The Tebhaga movement was manifested in the undivided Bengal in mid 1940s centering around a demand for *tebhaga* (two-third shares) by sharecroppers of their produce for themselves, instead of one-half traditionally given to them by the *jotedars*—a class of intermediary landowners. This movement grew against the backdrop of the flourishing interest of the intermediary class of landowners on the one hand and that of the deterioration of the economic status of the agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and poor peasants on the

other. The deteriorating economic condition of the lowest strata was reflected in the rapid expansion in the number of the sharecroppers and agricultural labourers in the Bengal agrarian society of the time. Report of the Land Revenue Commission in 1940 observed that of 8,547,004 inquired acres all over the Bengal Province undivided Bengal 592,335 acres were transferred, of which 31.7 per cent was turned over to *barga* (sharecropping) and 24.6 per cent to under-tenants (LRC 1940, Vol. 2: 120). The traders, moneylenders and intermediary landowners exploited to the hilt the poverty of the poor peasant and lent him money at usurious rates of interest. When the poor peasant was unable to repay the debt and lost his land to the creditor, he was resettled on the same land on condition that he handed over half of the produce to the creditor. The peasants who were not settled on it as sharecroppers became agricultural labourers. The Land Revenue Commission pointed out in 1940 that agricultural labourers constituted 22.5 per cent of the total number of families of Bengal (LRC 1940, Vol. 2: 117-20).

The exploitative intermediacy systems of land tenure, which was introduced through the Permanent settlement, had furthered the process of downward mobilisation of the peasantry of Bengal. The emerging patterns of exploitation and social oppression, impoverishment and pauperization of the peasantry got institutionalized during the British rule (Rasul 1974). Questions pertaining to the deteriorating economic condition of the peasantry received organised focus since early 1920s with the formation of the Communist Party of India (CPI) 1921, the Workers and Peasants Party (WPP) 1922 and the Krishak Praja Party (KPP) in 1929. The Bengal Kisan Sabha (VKS), a provincial branch of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) was formed in 1936. The KPP won the provincial election with promise to abolish the intermediary system of land ownership. In alliance with the Congress it formed the first popular Ministry in Bengal and subsequently appointed the Land Revenue Commission in 1938 to look in to the agrarian issues. This commission recommended in 1940 that "All *bargadars* should be treated as tenants, that the share of the crops legally recoverable from them should be one-third, instead of half" (Vol. I, 1940: 69). However as the KPP did a volte-face on agrarian problems the government showed no urgency for implementing the recommendation of the Land Revenue Commission the AIKS began to radicalize its agrarian programme. In November 1946 the BKS passed a resolution in Calcutta for ' *Tebhaga*' (two thirds share of the produced crops) for the sharecroppers and '*langal jar janin tar*' (land to the tiller).

North Bengal, especially the Dinajpur district became centre of the BKS activism because of the high intensity of the sharecropping system of land cultivation there. The poor peasantry of Khanpur village, who were mostly from the scheduled castes (Rajbansi, Polia, and Mali), the scheduled tribes (the Oroan, Colkamar Santal) and ex-tribes (Mahato) responded spontaneously to this movement. When the movement escalated into mass action, the sharecroppers began to harvest paddy and carry it to their own *kholan* (courtyard) under the instructions of the local leaders. In a surcharged situation of heightening tension the local (landowner filed a FIR against the sharecroppers. Early on the morning of 20 February 1947 police entered the village and arrested a few sharecroppers. This news spread like wildfire all over the village, and an alarm was raised by the beating of drums, blowing conch shells and beating gongs and utensils by the peasant women. The village and its environs reverberated to the sounds of drums, tin jars, gongs and conch shells. A vast mass of poor peasants and sharecroppers from both Khanpur and its neighbouring villages, armed with bows and arrows, *lathis* and axes, surged on the police. They demanded the release of their sharecroppers. But the police were adamant and ended up firing 119 rounds, injuring hundreds and killing 22 sharecroppers, including two women.

The episode of Khanpur triggered off the *Tebhaga* movement very quickly in

most part of Bengal. Poor peasants ignoring their conventional ties with the landowners declined to share half of their produce with the landowners. Protest, firing, killing became part of this agrarian society in 194. However the colonial rulers used all possible repressive measures to crash this movement by introducing a reign of terror in the rural areas.

31.6 The Telangana Movement (1946-52)

The Telangana Movement (1946-52) of Andhra Pradesh was fought against the feudal oppression of the rulers and local landowners. The agrarian social structure of Hyderabad emerged to be very oppressive in 1920s and thereafter. The process of the sub-infeudation in the landholding accentuated the insecurity of the tenants and the poor peasants. In rural Telangana's political economy, the *jagirdars* and *deshmukhs*, locally known as *dora*, played a dominant role. They were the intermediary landowners with higher titles cum moneylenders-cum-village officials and were mostly from the upper caste or influential Muslim community background. Because of their privileged economic and political status they could easily subject the poor peasantry to extra-economic coercion through the *vetti* (force labour) system. At the bottom of the agrarian hierarchy were the untouchable castes and tribal groups, such as the Konda, Reddy, Koyas, Chenchus, Lambodis and Banjaras. The lower strata of the agrarian hierarchy had a sub-human level of existence. The Harijans and the tribals were the worst sufferers under this system (Dhanagare, 1983). Besides the unbridled feudal exploitation, the Muslim ruler also maintained the utter isolation of from the vast masses of his Hindu subjects (Sundarayya, 1985).

The Indian National Congress, Andhra Jana Sangam and Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) raised the issue of poor condition of the peasantry of Telengana since late 1920s. Several resolutions were passed against the *jagirdari* and the *vetti* system by the AMS. Under the auspices of the AMS the Jagir Ryotu Sangham was formed in 1940 to bring pressure upon the government to solve the problems of the *jagir* peasants working under the *jogirdars*. Significantly the Andhra Communist Party was established in 1934. After the ban on the Communists was lifted in 1942, they captured the leadership of AMS. They raised the issues of 'abolition of *vetti*', 'prevention of rack-renting and eviction of tenants', 'reduction of taxes, revenue and rents', 'confirmation of occupancy (*patta*) rights of the cultivating tenants', and so on. All these processes of mobilisation of the peasantry increased tensions in the rural areas of Telengana, which ultimately culminated into the political consciousness of the peasants, and gradually there was a new awakening (Kannabiran, V., Lalitha, K. et al. 1989.)

It was against such forced labour and illegal exaction and against eviction of the poor tenants that the peasantry of the Telangana region of Hyderabad State, waged innumerable struggles. The beginnings of the Telangana armed struggles were against the atrocities of Vishnur Ramchandra Reddy, the *deshmukh* in Jangaon tehsil of Nalgonda district, in 1946, when his goondas attacked and murdered Doddi Komarayya, the local Andhra Mahasabha worker, in Kadivendi village on July 4 (Sundarayya, 1985:13-14). This incident intensified the struggle between the landlords openly supported by the Nizam's government and the poor peasantry organized by the CPI in the disguise of the AMS.

The movement took a new turn with India attaining independence in 1947, and the subsequent refusal of the Nizam to join the Indian Union. The CPI openly called for a guerrilla struggle against the *razakars* (state paramilitary wing) and the government forces by forming village defence committees and by providing arms training to the *dalams* (armed squads). The administrative machinery of the Nizam came to a standstill in nearly 4000 villages. In its place were established *gram rajyas* (village administrative units). *Vetti* was abolished, and some 1.2 million acres of land was redistributed very quickly. Unpaid debts

were cancelled, tenants were given full tenancy rights, toddy tappers got back rights over trees, untouchability was abolished and a new social awareness became visible. Armed women defended themselves against the *razakars* (K. Lalita, V. Kannabirn et.al. 1989: 14). With the Nizam refusing to merge with the independent Indian Union, the Indian government initiated army action against the Nizam, and subsequently against the CPI in September 1948. The CPI adopted the path of a protracted struggle. They planned for a liberated area and intensified their struggle. However, it was very difficult for the communist cadres in Telangana to withstand the Indian Army. Several hundred peasant rebels were killed. Many died for lack of shelter and support. With the Nizam already overthrown by the Indian Army, the logic of the movement was re-thought by the leaders and the common peasantry of Telangana. In 1951 the politbureau of the CPI called off the struggle.

Sundarayya (1985) presents an overall balance-sheet of this peasant uprising: 'As many as 4000 communists and peasant militants were killed; more than 10,000 communist cadres and people's fighters were thrown into detention camps and jails for a period of 3-4 years; no fewer than 50,000 people were dragged into police and military camps from time to time, there to be beaten, tortured and terrorized for weeks and months together. Several lakhs of people in thousands of villages were subjected to police and military raids and to cruel lathi-charges; the people in the course of these military and police raids lost property worth millions of rupees, which were either looted or destroyed; thousands of women were molested and had to undergo all sorts of humiliations and indignities' (Sundarayya, 1985:4).

31.7 Naxalite Movement (1967-71)

The agrarian society of independent India experienced a new epoch in the history of peasant movements with the peasant uprising of May 1967 under the Naxalbari *thana* of Darjeeling district of West Bengal. Immediately after the country's independence, the Govt. of West Bengal enacted the West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act (1953) to abolish the *zamindari* and other intermediary systems and the West Bengal Land Reform Act (1955) to put a ceiling on landholdings, to reserve for the sharecroppers 60 per cent of the produced share, and to put a restriction on the eviction of sharecroppers. However due to the lack of the political will the progressive provisions of these acts remained in the statute book only. Moreover eviction of the tenants and the sharecroppers, sharp downward mobility of the peasants, their economic insecurity and unemployment emerged to be the integral part of the agrarian society of that period. The sharecroppers who constituted 16 per cent of the rural households in 1952-53 came down to 2.9 per cent in 1961-62. Though because of malafide land transfer proportion of the marginal and the small cultivators increased among the rural population, in real term poor peasantry was under going a desperate situation caused by their livelihood insecurity. This was clearly visible from the phenomenal increase of the agricultural labourers from 15.3% in 1961 to 26.2 in 1971 and the decline of the category of cultivators 38.5% to 32 % during the same period (Census of India 1961, 1971). Significantly the All India Credit Committee in its report of 1968 pointed out to the 'emergence of sharp polarization between classes in the rural areas' (Govt. of India: 1968)

In this backdrop while the economic condition of the poor peasantry was deteriorating, the political happenings in West Bengal took a new turn. In February 1967 the United Front (dominated by the communal parties viz. CPI, CPI (M) RSP etc.) came to with the promise like 'land to the tiller', 'proletarian rule', etc. The United Front pledged to implement the land reforms, promising land to all landless households and invited more militant initiatives from the peasantry as an organized force (Banerjee 1980: 105). The Left political parties

had initiated rigorous mobilisation of the peasantry in the Naxalbari areas since the early 1960s when the landowners of the Naxalbari region started large-scale eviction of sharecroppers. The CPI-M Darjeeling district committee started to organize the peasants on a militant footing after the United Front Government was formed. .

The Naxalite movement spread rapidly in many parts of the country, protracted arm resistance, declaration of liberated area, killing and arrest became a regular phenomena in the agrarian society of West Bengal. By the end of June 1967 the CPI-M leadership came out against the Naxalbari leaders, calling them ‘an organized anti-party group advocating an adventurist line of action’. Nineteen members were then expelled from the party. The rift was complete. Moving through the stages of the Naxalbari Peasant’s Struggle Aid Committee and a Coordination Committee, the CPI-ML was finally formed in May 1969 by the organized militant groups (Chatterjee 1998: 89).

31.8 Emerging Agrarian Social Structure and Peasant Movements

The agrarian societies of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and West Bengal (WB) have undergone a phenomenal change since the proliferation of the radical peasant movements. Both the states have initiated the elaborated land reform programmes affecting the agrarian social structure therein. However, the story of implementation of land reform laws has not been the same in AP and WB. AP has achieved a very low rate of success in acquiring and distributing surplus vested lands among the rural poor. West Bengal, however, has achieved a phenomenal success in this regard. In Andhra, till July 1992, only 0.729 million acres of land was declared ‘surplus vested’, of which 0.549 million acres was taken possession of and 0.504 million acres distributed among beneficiaries. In West Bengal, 1.229 million acres of land was declared surplus vested, of which 1.201 million acres was taken possession of and 0.936 million acres distributed. . A recent report shows that the Government of West Bengal had, till September 2000, distributed 1.045 million acres of land amongst 2.544 million beneficiaries. During this period the names of 1.495 million sharecroppers were recorded involving an area of 1.105 million acres of land (Government of West Bengal 2002). This process of implementation of land reforms has diversely affected the patterns of landholding and the agrarian relations prevailing in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

Table 1 shows that over the years the percentage of the marginal cultivators has increased in both the states. However, in WB the percentage increase of the marginal cultivators has been phenomenal with 23.84% and there has been a steady decline of all other categories all over the years including the small cultivators. On the other hand the emergence of the marginal cultivators have not been that sharper in AP with only 13.15%.

It is significant that marginal holding has been the mode of land ownership in West Bengal for the vast majority of the landowning household. That more than 40% of the marginal cultivators possess land of below 0.20-hectare size. All the small and the marginal cultivators are putting together represent a total of 70% of the land owning households in West Bengal. For Andhra

Pradesh they represent around 44% of the landowning household. However, the average size of land ownership is very low in West Bengal i.e. only 0.46 hectare while for A.P this is 0.78 hectare. The landless and the semi-landless constitute as high as 53.4% of the rural households in West Bengal and around 46% in A.P. Significantly inspite of land reform their proportion in the rural society is progressively increasing.

As against the broad scenario peasant movements have acquired new dimension in these states. Over the years the Left Parties have emerged to be the proud owners of a historical heritage of radical peasant movements. As the old issues were not resolved even after the proliferation of the radical movements poor peasants of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh was continuously mobilized on the issues of land reform and rural development especially by the communists. In West Bengal mobilization of the peasantry got a momentum since the United Left Front government has come into power in 1977. Indeed regular mobilization of the peasants has since been made to be a vehicle for the implementation of the land reform and rural development schemes. In Andhra Pradesh on the other hand the communist who are in opposition and the radical outfit of the communists mobilize the peasant on regular basis on several issues. Some of the emerging features of the agrarian social structure and mobilization of the peasants in three villages with the background radical movements are described below.

The rural society of Andhra Pradesh specially of the Telangana region have been experiencing constant mobilization of the peasants. It has experienced the vehement out burst of the celebrated Telangana movement. This area has a high concentration of the Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Caste household in the category of poor peasants. It is only partially agriculturally developed and land reform has been implemented only to a limited extent. Indeed land reform has not been able to alter the pre-existing agrarian arrangement as the old landlords (who are mostly the absentee landlords now) control a vast part of the village lands through their relatives living in the neighbouring areas. In this backdrop landless and the marginal cultivators who are also associated with various non-agricultural activities form the balm of the peasantry. Though the alternative economic activities have been an inseparable part of livelihood security of the peasantry here, these have not widened the process of economic mobility among them. Thus the peasantry of this village has remained more or less economically homogenous.

In recent years this village has been experiencing the extensive and frequent mobilizations of the poor peasantry under the auspices of the various Naxalite Groups and the other political parties. The peasants are thus exposed to various categories of political activities organised by Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committees (APCLC), Organisation for the Protection of Democratic Rights, Citizens Forum, Thudum Debba (militant organisation of the Scheduled Tribes), Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS- an organisation of Scheduled Castes) Ryto Seva Samithi, Jala Sandhana Samithi (demanding irrigation facilities for the peasants), CPI(ML) (People's War) and various other Naxalite outfits, besides the regular political parties viz., Telugu Desam Party, National Congress' Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India and the Telangana Rastriya Samiti (TRS). Various NGOs are also active in this area. Identification and distribution of surplus vested lands, speedy and impartial implementation of the development schemes, employment generation programme, irrigation, health, road, school etc facilities, harassment of the villagers by the police, suicide by the farmers, reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, compensation to the rape victim, prohibition, regional autonomy etc. have been the major issues for the mobilization of the peasantry of this area. Mobilisation is by and large institutionalized even though PWG plays a crucial role in their mobilisation. Significantly, wider economic and political processes are at time explained to be the cause of localised problem of the peasantry here. For example poverty, illiteracy and unemployment etc. of these peasants are explained in terms of the Telugu domination over the Telangana. The peasants are however very secretive about their political identity and frequently use political passivity as a weapon of their political action. With the organizational support from outside, leadership has been generated from within whereby the peasants have been trained to articulate and to talk of various societal issues politically. In the process of the mobilisation of the peasantry

the historical categories of caste, gender, regional, ethnically etc. have acquired several new meaning and significance.

The Tebhaga movement infected areas of West Bengal has remained symbolically a political hot bed for the mobilization of poor peasantry. Since mid 1980s this area has emerged to be agriculturally developed and occupationally diversified. Though land reform programme has been rigorously implemented, marginal and insignificant landholding has not been able to ensure economic security of the poor peasantry. Various new issues are cropped up in the village viz, problem of unemployment of the educated youth, road, transport and education facilities etc, implementation of the state sponsored development schemes, total literacy campaign, child and health care facilities, representation of women in the statutory bodies and so on. All political parties (CPI, CPI(M), RSP, and Indian National Congress, the Trinamul Congress) cutting across the ideological and organisational barriers raise similar issues. Significantly there has been frequent defection of political party supporters from one group to another.

Mobilisation has been absolutely institutionalized in this area. As peasantry occupies diverse economic positions the form and extent of their participation to the mobilisation have been diversified in nature. A large section of peasantry does not follow the path of political mobilisation for economic gain and has developed critical attitude for the leader. However, a section of the peasants because of their persisting poverty has emerged to be dependent on the political leaders to get the benefits of the development schemes for their livelihood security. They are indeed the poorest segment of the peasantry of this village and are available for all types of mobilisation.

Similarly the Naxalbari area also has remained agriculturally backward. Though there is a trend towards occupational diversification, none of these options has emerged to be economically viable except for the jobs in the plantation. Peasantry of these villages has remained more or less economically homogenized and the bulk of the peasantry of these villages is from the Scheduled Caste and Tribal background.

There have emerged multifaceted political mobilisations spearheaded by the CPI(M), Trinamul Congress, Indian National Congress, SUCI and the various groups of the Naxalite outfits viz, COI(M-L) (Kanu Sanyal), CPI(M-L) (Mahendra Mukherjee), CPI(M-L) (New Democracy.), CPI (M-L) (Janashakti), CPI(M-L) (Liberation.), Maoist Communist Centre (MCC), CPI(ML) - 2ND Central Committee, CPI(ML) - Party Unity etc. Of late, activists of Kamtapuri movement have also started organizing peasantry of these villages. There has been large-scale participation of the peasantry in all types of political mobilisation and collective action; and over the years these have shown an increasing trend. The most important occasions for these activisms have been that of participation in the meeting, processions and in the elections campaign, and on other various localised issues.

Notwithstanding the presence of the large number of the Naxalite groups and propagation of a section of the Naxalite for non-participation in the parliamentary democracy mobilisation process has remained largely institutionalized. Peasants are however divided among themselves not as much based on economic differentiation, as on their political association to political parties. Their association to political party moreover is not based on their conviction to political ideology; rather it is part of their survival need. Peasantry is very open and vocal about their political affiliation. Due to the prevailing agricultural backwardness and poverty the peasantry have emerge to be dependent on the political leaders. These relations prevent them to be critical of their leaders. A

31.9 Change in Collective Mobilization

Over the years there have been phenomenal changes in the pattern of collective mobilisation of the peasants. The Tebhaga, Telangana and the Naxalite movements even though were fought in different places and at different points of time, ideologically and also in terms of orientation towards change and forms of mobilisation, these were radical peasant movements. In recent years peasant movements have emerged to be reformative and institutionalized both in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. The Chart II describes the major trends of mobilisation of the peasantry in these two phases.

Chart :II Trends of Mobilisations in the Radical and Contemporary Peasant Movements.

Radical Peasant Movement	Reformative Peasant Movements
a) Mobilisation was initiated for specific goal and directed against the identified class enemies – the big landowners, usurers, police and administration.	- Mobilisation is initiated for diversified goals and not always directed against the class enemies.
b) Aggressive and hostile mobilisations without immediate limit.	- Aggressiveness and hostilities are limited within given direction.
c) Mobilisations against old norms and values	- Re-informing selected old norms and values through mobilisations.
d) Mobilisation was initiated by the political party of single ideological pursuit	- Mobilisation is initiated by the political parties of diversified political pursuits.
e) Mobilisation for far reaching structural change.	- Mobilisation mostly for structural stability and reformative initiatives within the given structure.
f) Rural poor mobilised to be the “change agencies”	- Rural people mobilised to be ‘beneficiaries’
g) Rural poor mobilised for an egalitarian social order	- Rural poor participated in the mobilisation as survival strategy.
h) Radicalization of mass mobilisation	- Institutionalization of mass-mobilisation
i) Mobilisation for unrecognised demands and mostly by the urecognised and secret organisations	- Mobilisation to pressurize the bureaucrats to implement recognised demands
j) Mobilisation faced opposition by the government authority	- Mobilisation planned and executed by the political parties in power.
k) Mobilisation directed against promordial dependency and extra-economic coercion of the lowest section of agrarian	- In the process of mobilisation the lowest section has become dependent on the political society. leaders to get economic benefits.

The contemporary peasant societies of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh however have experienced diverse forms of grass root mobilization. In West Bengal the

Left political parties who once sponsored radicalism and militancy for collective action are now concerned with institutionalized mass mobilization and electoral politics. In Andhra Pradesh CPI and CPI(M) the major communist parties are in opposition and have accepted the parliamentary electoral politics. The PWG (Ganpathi Faction) is a group among these Naxalite outfits which is opposed to the parliamentary democracy at present, while others have started taking part in the democratic process. At this level we may draw a comparative picture of mass mobilisation between Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal

Chart III: Facets of Commonalties and Differences between the Grass-root Mobilization in Contemporary Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.



31.10 Conclusion

In this unit we have discussed some of the crucial features of peasant movements in Indian society. We started with a conceptual discussion on peasant and peasant movement. The role peasant on revolutionary movements has also touched upon very briefly. The causes of the emergence of radical peasant movement, the form and extent of participation of peasant in these movements, and the course of action in these movements have been discussed. The process of transformation of these, movements over period of time and their socio-political ramifications for the peasants are also analyzed.

31.11 Further Readings

- 1) Dhanagare, D.N. 1983. *Peasant Movements in India 1920-1950*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.
- 2) Mukherjee, P.N. 1979. *From Extremism to Electoral Politics: Naxalite Participation in Elections*. Manohar: New Delhi.



Unit 32 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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32.1 Introduction

Since the middle of the last century 'social movements have moved from non-institutionalized margins of society to its very core'. The manifestation of new forms of organised collective actions since 1950s has added several new dimensions to the issues of social movement. In this context this unit will examine the social background of the emergence of new social movements. There are several new features of these movements. We have discussed these features at length in this unit. We have also tried to distinguish the new from the old social movements. The validity of these distinctions is also critically examined. The issues of new identity and autonomy of new social movements have been high lighted by several scholars. There issues are also examined in this unit.

32.2 New Social Movements: The Background

Since last five decades, especially after the proliferation of the Black Civil Rights Movement in the West in 1950s and 1960s, students movements in 1960s and 1970s, Women's Movement, anti-nuclear protests, gay rights, animal rights, minority nationalism etc. ethnic movements in 1970s and thereafter, social movements has emerged to be an area of special attention. There have been sincere efforts by the social scientists to redefine social movements from a critical and cognitive perspective. In this effort the prevalent schemes of analysis were questioned and many of the elements were identified in these social movement and at times several marginal issues were emphasized in a new contexts. The emergence of new forms of collective action especially in Western Europe and North America posed serious challenges to the social movement theorists to conceptualize this phenomena in terms of the prevailing discourse on social movement studies

Till 1950s the workers movements, peasants and tribal movements, at times caste, race, or linguistic and ethnic movements or other varieties of collective mobilisations are mostly explained within the Marxian framework of class struggle and the functionalist framework of mal functioning of the social order. It was however realized in the backdrop of the proliferation of these movements that these perspectives of studying social movements were deterministic. Within these conventions, social movements were analyzed mostly in terms of the ideological and organizational orientations. The Marxist scholars highlighted the class ideology of the collective mobilization. It emphasized on the role ideology that provided the legitimacy to such mobilizations. It focused on the unequal access to and control over the means of production between the two antagonistic classes that led to conflict in the society. In the functional analysis on the other, the organizational aspect of social movement articulated. For the Functionalist social movements were sources of potential disruption to an

organisation. Organized collective actions are viewed as dysfunctional aspect of the society. Here only by assigning a marginal position to social movement 'integrity of the functional theoretical system was ensured. On the other hand, though the Marxist analysis is concerned with social transformation, this has identified the 'classes' to be the sole agents of social transformation. Non-class movements are viewed critically, and sometimes with contempt or hostility' (Scott, A. 1990: 2).

Significantly both the Marxism and Functionalism provided single order explanation of the social movement. However the proliferation of these social movements in the 50s and 60s asked for a new perspective for analysis as there were new orientations. Most of the old movements are oriented to achieve in some form or the other materialistic goal. The new social movements on the other, are oriented to be non-materialistic, resort to plural, multiple and wide varieties of collective mobilisation, highlight the issues which cut across the boundaries of state, class, societies, culture and the nation. We shall be discussing these aspects of social movements in great details in the next section.

32.3 New Social Movement : Concepts and Features

It was indeed difficult to conceptualize the essence of all new forms of collective action within the paradigm of ideology or the rationally organised interest group. The practices of these new form of collective actions social movements are essentially non-violent, pragmatic, non-integrated, non-hierarchical, non-coercive, cross-class, cross-ideology, cross age in their constituencies (Hegedus, 1990: 63). Larana, Johnston and Guesfield (1994) suggest that the analysis of new social movements be advanced cross-culturally and by contrasting them with the class based movements of the past. They suggest the following characteristic features of the new social movement:

- a) There is no clear structural role of the participants of the new social movement as, very often than not, they have diffuse social status as youth, student, women, minority, professional groups etc.
- b) Ideologically these movements posited in sharp contrast to the Marxian concept of ideology of the working class movement. It is difficult to characterize new social movements as conservative or liberal, right or left, capitalist or socialist. These movements exhibit plural ideas and values.
- c) Mobilisations are linked to issues of symbolic and cultural identities than to economic issues.
- d) Action within these movements is a complex mix of the collective and individual confirmation of identity. Indeed the relation between the individual and the collective is blurred in these movements.
- e) These movements involve personal and intimate aspects of human life, e.g. eating, dressing enjoying, loving etc habits and patterns.
- f) Non-violence and civil disobedience etc. are the dominant patterns of collective mobilisation to challenge the dominant-norms of conduct.
- g) The proliferation of these movements are caused by the credibility crisis of the conventional channels for political participation.
- h) The new social movements are segmented diffused and decentralized (Ibid. :6-15).

Alan Scott identified the following prominent characteristics of these movements: a) These movements are primarily social and are more concerned with cultural sphere and mobilisation of civil society on socio-cultural issues, than with the political issues like seizure of power. b) These movements are

to be located within civil society and these are little concerned to challenge the state directly. These movements rather defend the civil societies against encroachment from increasingly technocratic state or from 'inner colonisation' by society's technocratic sub-structure. c) These social movements attempt to bring about change through changing values and developing alternative life-styles. These social movements are concerned with cultural innovations and creation of new life-styles. These also pose a challenge to the traditional values. 'The focus on symbols and identities is viewed as the source of new social movement's significance'. The new social movements bring about changes by challenging values and identities of the social actors rather than by more conventional and direct political actions. The processes of transformation of values, personal identities and symbols can be achieved through creation of alternative life-style and the discursive reformation of individual and collective wills. The main characteristics of new social movements organization are summarized by Scott as follows: i) locally based or centered on small groups ii) organised around specific, often local and single issue iii) cycle of movement activity and mobilisation; i.e. vacillation between periods of high and low activity, iv) often loose systems of authority, v) shifting membership, vi) 'common social critique' as the ideological frame of reference (Scott, 1990: 18).

32.4 Distinguishing Old from the New

However, it is problematic to use organizational form as a criterion to distinguish new social movements from that of old ones. First, there is a continuum from loose to tight organization. and, because there may be a progress within the movements towards the more formal and hierarchical end of this continuum over a period of time. To Scott (1990), there are important continuities between the new and older social movements. 'Thus the claim the new movements needs to be understood in a way which is qualitatively different from traditional approaches can not be sustained on empirical grounds alone. It is rather through the underlying social changes the distinctiveness be identified (Ibid: 35).

Irrespective of the distinction between the old and the new social movements we may identify the crucial roles played by social movements to develop a critic of the society. In the process of globalisation when the state is emerging to be more and more technocratic and all-powerful the voices and views of the individual citizen against the discontent of various forms remain mostly unheard. Again in the countries where the state represent the dominant section of the population, and the state machinery is involved in the corrupt practices, the access of the marginalised people even to the minimum need of the life remained unrealized. Social movements provide a framework to develop a critic of the society. It brings the institutional arrangements of the society under close scrutiny. The organising mechanisms, collective activism and the leadership of social movement provide the required space not only to develop a critic of the society but also for a transformative politics within the given structure. It also provides the space for the emergence of plural social structure with representative civil bodies to function as watchdog in a liberal democracy. Through this critic social movement produces a new collective identity. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) have tried to define social movements as processes in the formation by which individuals create new kind of social identity. To them all social life can be seen as a combination of action and construction whose meaning is deprived from the context and the understanding of the actors derive form it. They emphasize the creative role of consciousness and cognition in human action, what they call the cognitive praxis, which transforms groups of individual into social movement. Thus the cognitive praxis gives social movement particular meaning and consciousness.

32.5 New Social Movements and Quest for New

Identity

In the last unit we have mentioned about the significance of the process identity formation in a social movement, which has always played crucial roles to provide a sense of 'togetherness', 'we' feeling and a sense of 'belonging to' a group in all the critical stages progression of the movement. It not only develops linkages among the members of a group but also establishes linkages with the wider social processes. The process of collective identity formation not only redefines old identities, but also generates new identities with new perspective(s). In recent decades in the efforts to identify 'newness' in emerging social movements of the 1960s and there after, there has also been a genuine to have a fresh look on the issue of identity in social movements.

In the structural functional analysis of the society empirical categories (e.g. tribe, caste, race, aged, etc) has got a place of prominence while describing collective identities of these categories. In the Marxian analysis, on the other hand economic position has got a place of prominence in defining collectivities as 'class'. In this paradigm social identity has been reduced to class identity, which undergoes a process of formation/ transformation from 'class in itself' to 'class for itself. We shall highlight this formation/transformation little later. However, since late 1960s and onward, especially after the proliferation of the students, Green Peace, Black Civil Rights, women's etc movements in the United States and Western Europe efforts are made to comprehend and analyze the emerging processes of new collective identify formation in these social movements and the guiding principles towards these formations. It has been widely realized that it is not merely the empirical and the economic class position, but rather the issue of values, culture, subjectivity, morality, empowerment etc played crucial roles towards the formation of new collective identities in these movements. For example, after studying students' movement in Europe and America, Bertaux (1990) adds the view that "subjectivity" and "idealism" are essential elements of social movement and must be taken seriously. To quote him: subjectivity is central to an understanding of action and especially in the context of social movements, where action is not just norm abiding behaviour, but innovative and risky. Such concept as 'attitudes' or 'values' denote only one fraction of the personality while subjectivity refers to the subject in its totality." Indeed, Bertaux talks about the collective subjectivity: "it concerns with the drastic change in the fabric of social life that takes place when a new movement is born." Regarding idealism, citing example from the first developing western societies, he observes that people who started social movements "were moved by a strong moral feelings—by idealism, rather than by a drive towards self interest" (1990:153).

Social movements help generate a sense of collective identity and new ideas that recognizes the reality itself. This reality is indeed context, culture, historicity and group specific. Melucci has emphasized on collective identity formation "which is an achieved definition of a situation, constructed and negotiated through the constitution of social networks which then connect the members of a group or movement through collective action to provide distinctive meaning to collective action. To him, what holds individual together as a 'we' can never be completely translated into the logic of means-ends calculation or political rationality, but always carries with it margins of non-negotiability in the reasons for an ways of acting together' (Melucci 1992). To him, social movements grow around relationship of new social identity that are voluntarily conceived "to empower" members in defense of this identity (1992, 1996). Eyerman and Jamison (1991) assert that 'by articulating consciousness, social movement provides public spaces for generating new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas. Thus by producing new knowledge, by reflecting on their own cognitive identity, by saying what they stand for, by challenging the dominant assumptions of the social order, social movements develop new ideas those are fundamental to the process of

human creativity. Thus social movements develop worldviews that restructure cognition, that re-cognize reality itself. The cognitive praxis of social movements is an important source of new social images and transformation of societal identities (1991: 161-166). Hegedus (1990) asserts that social movements involve actions for 'doing'. 'The involvement in an action is a matter of conscience and emotion, of responsibility and intention, of reflection and (com) passion, it is basically moral, global and individual (1990: 266). Thus social movements are framed based on a collective identity of various groups viz., women, environmentalists, students, peasant, worker etc. who are organised on the basis of common identity and interests. To Allan Scott (1991), in a social movement the actor's collective identity is linked to their understanding of their social situation. To him 'a social movement is a collective actor constituted by individuals who understand themselves to have common interest, and at least some significant part of their social existence, a common identity' (1991: 6)

Transformation of Identity

Social movements not only help generating new collective identity these also provide a broad field for the transformation of social identity [e.g. transforming *Serie* into *groups en fusion*, (Sartre 1960), 'class-in-itself' to 'class-for-itself', (Marx 1974) etc.]. Sartre calls *serie* the normal state of crowds; that is, series of atomized individuals, each one seen as isolated in his or her inner world going his or her own way and not caring about the other's ways. What Sartre is pointing out, however, is that, whenever and wherever this figure is actually doing or even walking in the street, it has a silent companion: 'social control'. "The public space is wholly under the control of the established power. Every individual, whatever she or he thinks of the manifest public discourse 'All is well' and its latent content 'Nothing can be changed', whether he or she accepts the rule of this power or rejects it, does so secretly, thus behaving as if accepting it. Therefore each one, looking at all the others who work, comply and keep quiet, thinks they are alone in secretly rejecting this social order. When, however, frustration mounts in each person individually, it takes only a small event to trigger an instantaneous and massive change of state, from *serie* to *groupe en fusion*. As soon as each person in a serialized mass realizes that some others contest the established power, as he or she takes one step forward to openly express support, a chain reaction spreads through the atomized series and transforms it into a fluid group (*sartre's groupe en fusion*) which instantly moves from the status of subordinated passive object to that of subject capable of action." (cf. Bertaux. 1990: 155-156). Indeed, new social movements provide the required platform for such transformation.

In the Marxian analysis transformation in the collective identity has been viewed as transformation of the class identities from that of 'class-in 'itself' to 'class-for-itself'. In this analogy, however, transformation of societal identity is viewed in terms of the transformation of class identities only.

It is important that in the context of transformation of a social movements new identities do emerge from within the old ones. For example in the process of sustained mobilisation of the peasantry in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh new identities have emerged in these peasant societies in the form of gender, ethnicity and caste identities. We shall be discussing this issue in the last section of this unit.

32.6 Autonomy of New Identity

Can new identity as formed out of collective action be autonomous of the ideology and organisation of the movement? Scholars have identified new social movement's ideology with freedom and life. In this context the notion of autonomy is crucial. There are several dimensions to this issue.

- 1) Personal autonomy: 'Psycho-social practices, such as consciousness arising within the women's movement, have had at least one of their aims - the liberation of individual women from personal and ideological barriers to personal freedom through the reconstruction of their life histories and by making them aware of personal oppressions, while at the same time stressing their potential power as women'.
- 2) Extension of Personal and Group Autonomy: 'The narrowly defined political aims of these movements are comprehended as an extension of personal and group autonomy by challenging several restrictions on freedom'. Thus the arguments for free abortions on demand can be viewed as a way of increasing a women's freedom to make choices concerning her own body, of removal of gender or racial discrimination at work as extending of range of individual or collective freedom enjoyed by group members'
- 3) Autonomy struggle: Autonomy struggle of the new social movements demands that the representatives of these movements be allowed to fight their own "without interference from other movements and without subordinating their demands to other external priorities'. These aspects of autonomy are closely linked (Scott, 1990:18-20).

However, any attempt to conceptualize new social movements exclusively in terms of autonomy may be confusing. The distinction between personal and political is not very clean. The issue of personal autonomy, freedom etc. are political in nature" (Scott, 90: 23). The assumption that new social movement is autonomous of political interference and is essentially concerned with cultural issues is also not valid. Many of the new social movements are concerned with the political questions, for example 'citizens' rights; representations, civil rights movements. All these are oriented towards political and legal institutions. Thus the issue of autonomy is to be circumscribed specifically in the context of the social movement under study.

32.7 New Social Movements and Resistance against Domination

Actors in subordinate positions are never wholly dependent and are often very adept at converting whatsoever resources they possess into some degree of control over the conditions of reproduction of the system (Giddens (1982). Thus 'compliance of the subordinate within the power relations may be explained not by lack of resistance, but by the absence of the means to implement such resistance' (Mann 1985). The structure of the domination thus, is not free from contestation. There have been resistance and struggle in various forms against this domination. To J.C. Scott even in the large-scale structures of domination the subordinates have a fairly extensive social existence outside the immediate control of the dominant. It is in such settings that a shared critique of domination develops by way of 'creating a 'hidden transcript' that represents a critique of power as spoken behind the back of the dominant.' He suggests that rumours, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes and the theater of the powerless function as a mechanism to indirectly develop a critique of power (1990: viii). Let us examine the ways, new collective identities have emerged in India as a language of resistance against domination.

New Collective Identities: Identity is a social construction. 'It is a continually shifting description of ourselves' (Hall 1990). Identities are emerged based on the probability of choice, plurality of options and reasons. And to 'to deny plurality, choice and reasoning in identity can be a source of repression' (Sen 1999: 22). Identities are self-cognition tied to roles, through roles, to positions in organized social relationships. That a given identity can be invoked in a variety of situations or it 'can be defined as differential probability.' Here ' we may reflect on the multiple identities of the contemporary subject, that is the

weaving of the patterns of identity from the discourses of class, race, nation gender, etc.(Stryker 1990:873-74). The construction of identity also involves the social production of boundaries reflecting the process of inclusion and exclusion (Cerutti 2001). As collective identity is a matter of social construction, it gets reconstructed in multiple ways in the process of transformation of social movements. Social movements not only help generate new collective identity , but also provide a broad field for the transformation of this identity.

Sustained grassroots mobilizations have paved the way for the articulation and rejuvenation of gender, caste, farmer, citizen, and ethnic etc identities. In West Bengal peasants have been part of the Kamtapuri Movement as in North Bengal, and limited NGO activism and in Andhra Pradesh the anti-Arrack (prohibition) movement, Maadigaa and Thudum Debba, Telangana statehood movement civil liberties, farmers etc movements.

The Kamtapur movement for regional, cultural, ethnic autonomy of the Rajbanshi (a Scheduled caste) has started gaining ground in north Bengal with the demand of a separate state comprising the six districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda. To initiate this movement, a regional party by the name of Uttarakhand Dal was formed in 1980. Now this movement has got momentum under the leadership of the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP). Through this movement the Rajbanshis are putting up resistance against the gradual erosion of their cultural and linguistic identity, and their economic marginalization in society. They allege that north Bengal has been economically neglected and politically dominated by the Kolkata centered state administration of West Bengal. This movement has taken a new turn with the formation of an extremist group called the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO) which has initiated frontal attack on the Left activists in various parts of North Bengal. A section of the Rajbanshis, who are now growing more and more identity conscious in terms of history, language, traditional social structure, occupation and land rights has become part of this movement. Unemployed educated youth and school dropouts are more open in expressing their adherence to this movement than others. A young men from Naxalbari (who preferred to remain unidentified in the wake of police action against KLO activists), says:

“We are deprived of all opportunities in our own land. The outsiders own the tea gardens. All government services are taken away and manned by the *bhatias* (Bengali migrants from other part of the state). ... Marwaris and Punjabis who look down upon us, own all the businesses. They laugh at our language, our food habits, and our dress. We have to speak in their language in our own land.....”.

Though the separate Telangana statehood movement in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh has a long history, it has got a momentum in recent years with the formation of the Telangana Rastriya Samithi (TRS) and its electoral success in the last election. Several issues have been raised pertaining to Andhra domination over the Telangana region in the economic, cultural and political terms. Most important among these have been that of the exploitation of the natural resources of Telangana for the benefits of the other parts of the state, appointment of more and more Andhra-speaking people in the government jobs in the Telangana region, and persisting agricultural backwardness, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, etc., of the people of Telangana. The economic miseries of Telangana are explained in terms of Andhra domination over Telangana. ‘The wholesale exploitation of the resources of Telangana for the benefit of the Andhra region is accompanied by attacks on the way of life of the Telangana people. ...The Andhra rulers are never tired of saying that the people of Telangana are uncultured. Thus the suicidal attempt to subjugate Telangana permanently continues’ (Jadhav 1997)

Again Maadigaa Reservation Porata Samithi movement of the Scheduled Castes

and Thudum Debba movement of the Scheduled Tribes are demanding re-categorization of each of the Scheduled castes and tribes of Andhra Pradesh into A, B, C, and D categories based on their levels of economic, educational and political advancement for the purpose of getting benefits of reservation. Again there have been the cotton growers' and anti-suicide movements of the farmers in the Telangana region. The anti-arrack movement led by peasant women has had its strong impact all over Andhra Pradesh. Poor peasants have been parts of most of these movements. For example, Rajeeramma, the female *sarpanch* of Malla Reddy Palle, was associated with the anti-arrack movement. She is also a strong advocate of the Maadigaa reservation movement, and a participant in the cotton growers and anti-suicide movements. She is also part of the separate Telangana state movement. She says, 'the life of a peasant women in Telangana is full of struggle and we are all part of the struggle in Telangana'.

The Left political parties have tried both ideologically and strategically to inculcate the 'class for itself' identity of the peasantry. However, over the years, in the process of ideological modification and strategic class alliance with the landed gentry for electoral politics, the basis of class-based politics has widely eroded among the peasantry (Bhattacharyya 1999). Again as the class identity has not looked many of the micro issues. Thus in alongside the old actors of the class, groups, political parties and the state with all its instruments, new actors have emerged' in the form of caste, gender, ethnicity and religion (Webster 1999).

Autonomy of Identity: The process of transformation peasant movements from radicalization to institutionalization has exhibited a trend of transition from the so-called 'old' to 'new' social movements. It has been highlighted that new social movements do not bear a clear relation to the structural role of the participants, that their social base transcends class structures, that they exhibit plural ideas and values, that their ideological characteristics stand in sharp contrast to the Marxist concept of ideology as a unifying and totalizing element for collective action, and that they involve the emergence of new collective identities. 'These characteristics of the new social movements however are not independent of their links with the past. Nor is there any absence of continuity with the old, although that varies with each movement ... Even movements with old histories have emerged in new forms with more diffuse goals and different modes of mobilization and conversion. It is both the newness of expression and extension as well as the magnitude and saliency of such movements that constitutes the basis for revised frameworks of understanding' (Larana, Johnston and Guesfield 1984: 8-9).

The social agenda of the new social movements are 'based on local movements with multiple identities located in civil society, stressing new ways of social communication (solidarity and mutual understanding) and a new harmonic relationship with nature (Schuurman 1993: 189). In the context of West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, it is observed that the old mass movements that advocated the emancipatory projects for the proletariat through seizure of political power have given birth to various local movements of multiple identities in the process of transformation of these movements and sustenance of these mobilisations. These have started exhibiting a plurality of ideas, values, ideological orientations and collective action. The process of formation of new collective identities frequently and explicitly transcends the pre-defined process of class identity formation as most of the new collective identities, namely, gender, caste, region and ethnicity, are autonomous of the given aims and objectives of the movement of the Left parties.

It would however be problematic to describe the autonomy of the evolved patterns of identity in terms of the new social movements alone, as the substantive issues involved in mobilization do not purely belong to the cultural

domain alone. There are several political and economic issues involved in these mobilizations rather. Through their everyday experiences of struggle and prolonged participation in collective action the peasantry has been trained to defend their identity and to articulate the strategy of their resistance against domination. These everyday life experiences of resistance form the basis of the praxis of peasantry against domination whereby they have also got alternative choices to express their resistance against domination

In the context of new social movements, the notion of autonomy has been used as the expression of personal autonomy, extension of personal and group autonomy and as an expression of autonomy struggle whereby social movements are allowed to grow without interference from the outside (Scott. 1990). Subaltern studies have, on the other hand, visualized the autonomy of the peasant struggle in terms of their localized manifestations. Ranajit Guha argues that during the colonial period, subaltern constituted an autonomous domain with wide variety of generally autonomous modes of thought and action expressed through rebellions, riots and popular movements. To him 'rebellion was not, therefore, merely some automatic reflex action to external economic or political stimulus; it was 'peasant praxis', the expression through peasant action of the collective consciousness of the peasantry (Guha 1983). According to Sumit Sarkar, the spontaneous unrest like the looting of *hats*, tribal movements, kisan movements, and so on often tended to remain autonomous, scattered and remained mostly outside the ambit of the mainstream nationalist movement in colonial India. He also points out that the poor man typically outmatches his oppressor not through any kind of joint action but through an individual battle of wits and often at a great cost to himself (Sarkar 1985: 51-62). Partha Chatterjee is of the view that the 'dominant groups, in their exercise of domination do not consume or destroy the dominated classes for there would be no relation of power and hence no domination. Without their autonomy the subalterns would have no identity of their own (Chatterjee 1998: 166).

The new identities as have been evolved and constructed in the peasant societies of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal are in their own ways autonomous of the organizational, ideological and pre-defined boundaries of collectivities as propagated in the class discourse. However these multiple identities of caste, gender, region, ethnicity, etc., have defined boundaries of inclusion and exclusion—and also at times use the organizational linkages and ideologies of wider society as guiding principles for their actions. For example, the ethnic movements in north Bengal and in the Telangana region, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes reservation movements, civil liberties women's groups etc have formed their own organizations at the regional and the state level. Likewise, is the process of formation of NGOs, which is linked with the emerging social development discourse of 'development with empowerment'. The self-assertion of, say, a scheduled caste labourer, and a tribal woman are also linked to the resurgence of the Dalit and women's movements at the grassroots.

But all these identities, and linkages of these identities to the wider world, are not sudden manifestations. Nor are they imposed from outside by the intervention of outside agencies. Rather, peasantry has articulated their issues through their everyday experiences, and the new identities are formed from within in the process of responding to the emerging challenges they regularly face. Sustained mobilizations have made the peasantry aware of the various bases of their oppression and subordination in society, be it caste, class, ethnicity, regionalism, gender, etc. Hence they are to articulate accordingly the art of their resistance both individually and collectively; if needed by reconstructing parallel, and at times alternative, identities. Here linkages with outside agencies come at a later stage through increasing interactivity with the larger world around. Pulla Ravindran) a scheduled caste leader from Warangal

in Andhra Pradesh, recounts his experience:

We have been oppressed and exploited in various ways. At times we are exploited as the Maadigaa scheduled caste. Our women are exploited as women, labourers, and as scheduled caste members. We are also exploited and discriminated against as Telanganites ... As we have been aware of the various situations of our oppression, we resist it in all possible ways. Our oppression however does not end. If we resist from one direction, it appears from the other.. We try to resist oppression from all possible directions now.

In spite of transformation of the peasant movements from the phase of radicalization to institutionalization, and sustenance of the mobilizations, the peasantry continues to be marginalized. Though their identity has been reconstructed over the years, the elements of marginality—both in the socio-economic and the political sense—remain attached to them. The issue of livelihood security is of crucial significance to the peasantry. They tend to use the available channels of political mobilization and activism to ensure the daily livelihood. They are to compromise at times with the structure of domination for their livelihood security. In this context, their participation in routinized collective mobilization, even if it contributes to their domination, is a matter of their rational calculation.

Indeed, through sustained mobilization, peasants have been able to carve out a space for the articulation of their interests and formation of new identities that look for liberation from the coercive bases of dependency and domination. Through these identities they try to gain legitimacy of their praxis against domination.

32.8 Conclusion

In this unit we have discussed the socio-political background of the emergence of new social movements in the West. Scholars have identified several new features of this social phenomena. We have briefly highlighted these features. The distinguishing features between the new and the old social movement are also discussed here. Formation of new collective identity and autonomy of these identities have been subjects of critical query in the social movement studies. These issues have also been discussed here. In the last section we have discussed the process emergence of new collective identities with the transformation of social movements. Here articulation of language of resistance against domination as emerged within new social movements has also been discussed.

32.9 Further Readings

1. Larana, E. et al. (Eds) 1984. New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity. Temple University Press: Philadelphia.
2. Scott, A.C. 1991. Ideology and New Social Movements. Unwin Hyman: London.