BSOC-132
SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA

SOCIOLOGY OF INDIA

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Block 2 Social Structures and Practices	
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Course Contents

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Sociology as a discipline is considered to be the daughter of the Industrial Revolution. Like the other social sciences, it has developed with the development of modern industrial capitalism in Europe. The Enlightenment period and the consequent growth in science and technology revolutionized not only the way people lived and produced but also their ideas and ways of living. A general sense of transition and transformation of society set in motion radical changes in the European world. This subsequently influenced and dramatically impacted all societies globally; including India.

Sociology is the study of the ways in which human beings interact with each other. It studies the network of established social relations in which all customs beliefs, arts and crafts everything are subsumed. It can also be defined as the study of network or pattern of social relations in society. Thus, as a discipline, sociology attempts to study the nature of society; its social structure and functions or practices. It tries to explain the different social institutions in society and how social change impacts society. Sociology attempts to learn how the different social institutions change, such as, family marriage, kinship economy, polity etc., Continuous changes take place in all societies. Some changes are internal and some changes are due to external factors due to the impact of other societies and cultures, such as, the colonial rule in India. It is these changes in the different roles and statuses of people which are the very core of the subject matter of sociology. Thus, from the level of individual to the level of social groups and communities which link people and their perceptions in society sociology attempts to study them.

We have in this course on **Sociology of India**, attempted to explain to you in the first block, **India as a Plural Society** two units, Unity and Diversity in India and Changing India. In these units the overall nature and culture of society in India has been described. The first unit highlights the very unique aspect of India that is, its being a plural society with multiple cultures, communities, regional differences, languages etc. These have made India have immense social diversities. Yet, we bring to your knowledge about the cross cutting forces of unity in terms of its geographical boundaries, as well as other forces which unify India. With time everything changes and so does society in India. Therefore, changing India highlights these elements of changes in Indian society.

The Second block, **Social Structure and Practices** discusses three different aspects which define society in India. These are **Tribes, Caste and Class**. We explain to you the nature of tribes in India. How they exist and are assimilated in the larger society. The challenges that they face in their day to day life. Caste is another form of social stratification which is unique to Indian society. Unlike caste, class is an open form of social stratification and prior to Independence in India, we found that caste and class were subsumed with each other. However, due to Colonial impact and especially after Independence and the provisions of our Constitution, there has been rapid social mobility in society and this has led to the caste identities and class identities becoming separate from each other in society in India.

The third, block **Social Institutions and Change** tries to focus on the topic of family, marriage and kinship in India. We have provided different approaches and theories to explain these concepts with suitable examples Religion being one of the most sensitive but very significant institution of society has been sociologically analysed and explained to you so that society in India, being a plural society, can be understood.

The fourth block, **Social Identities and Change** has three units. Each unit explains the major social identities on the basis of which society gets stratified and hierarchically arranged. Many of the social stigmas and exploitations occur due to low social status associated with some of these identities giving rise to social movements. So we have described the dalit social movements, tribal and ethnic movements, and gender based movements in India.

The fifth and final block, **State, Society and Religion** highlights two related but different issues or concerns of society in India. First, is Communalism and second is Secularism. Here the historical, social and critical issues linked with both these terms have been described, discussed and analysed.

Block 1
India as a Plural Society

BLOCK 1 INTRODUCTION

We have in this course on **Sociology of India**, attempted to explain to you in the first block, **India as a Plural Society** two units, Unity and Diversity in India and Changing India. In these units the overall nature and culture of society in India has been described. The first unit highlights the very unique aspect of India that is, its being a plural society with multiple cultures, communities, regional differences, languages etc. These have made India have immense social diversities. Yet, we bring to your knowledge about the cross cutting forces of unity in terms of its geographical boundaries, as well as other forces which unite India. With time everything changes and so does society in India. Therefore, changing India highlights these elements of changes in contemporary Indian society.

UNIT 1   UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN INDIA*

Structure

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    1.2.2 Meaning of Unity

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    1.4.4 Tradition of Interdependence

1.5 Let Us Sum Up

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1.0   OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to :

- explain the concept of unity and diversity;

- describe the forms and bases of diversity in India;

- examine the bonds and mechanisms of unity in India; and

- provide an explanation to our option for a composite culture model rather than a uniformity model of unity.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with unity and diversity in India. You may have heard a lot about unity and diversity in India. But do you know what exactly it means? Here we will explain to you the meaning and content of this phrase. For this purpose the unit has been divided into three sections.

In the first section, we will specify the meaning of the two terms, diversity and unity.

In the second section, we will illustrate the forms of diversity in Indian society. For detailed treatment we will focus on the four forms of diversity, race, language, religion and caste.

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*Adopted from IGNOU, BDP ESO-12, Unit 1 pp. 9-22 by Archana Singh

In the third section, we will bring out the bonds of unity in India. These are geopolitical, the culture of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence.

Above all, we will note that the unity of India is born of a composite culture rather than a uniform culture.

1.2 CONCEPTS OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

We begin by clarifying the meaning of the terms diversity and unity.

1.2.1 Meaning of Diversity

Ordinarily diversity means differences. For our purposes, however, it means something more than mere differences. It means collective differences, that is, differences which mark off one group of people from another. These differences may be of any sort: biological, religious, linguistic etc. On the basis of biological differences, for example, we have racial diversity. On the basis of religious differences, similarly, we have religious diversity. The point to note is that diversity refers to collective differences.

The term diversity is opposite of uniformity. Uniformity means similarity of some sort that characterises a people. 'Uni' refers to one; 'form' refers to the common ways. So when there is something common to all the people, we say they show uniformity. When students of a school, members of the police or the army wear the same type of dress, we say they are in 'uniform'. Like diversity, thus, uniformity is also a collective concept. When a group of people share a similar characteristic, be it language or religion or anything else, it shows uniformity in that respect. But when we have groups of people hailing from different races, religions and cultures, they represent diversity. D.N. Majumdar wrote a book with the title, Races and Cultures of India. Mark the words in the plural: Races (not Race); Cultures (not Culture).

Thus, diversity means variety. For all practical purposes it means variety of groups and cultures. We have such a variety in abundance in India. We have here a variety of races, of religions, of languages, of castes and of cultures. For the same reason India is known for its socio-cultural diversity.

1.2.2 Meaning of Unity

Unity means integration. It is a social psychological condition. It connotes a sense of one-ness, a sense of we-ness. It stands for the bonds, which hold the members of a society together.

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Uniformity presupposes similarity, unity does not. Thus, unity may or may not be based on uniformity. Unity may be born out of uniformity. Durkheim calls this type of unity a mechanical solidarity. We find this type of unity in tribal societies and in traditional societies. However, unity may as well be based on differences. It is such unity, which is described by Durkheim as organic solidarity. This type of unity characterizes modern societies. Let us see it in a diagram.
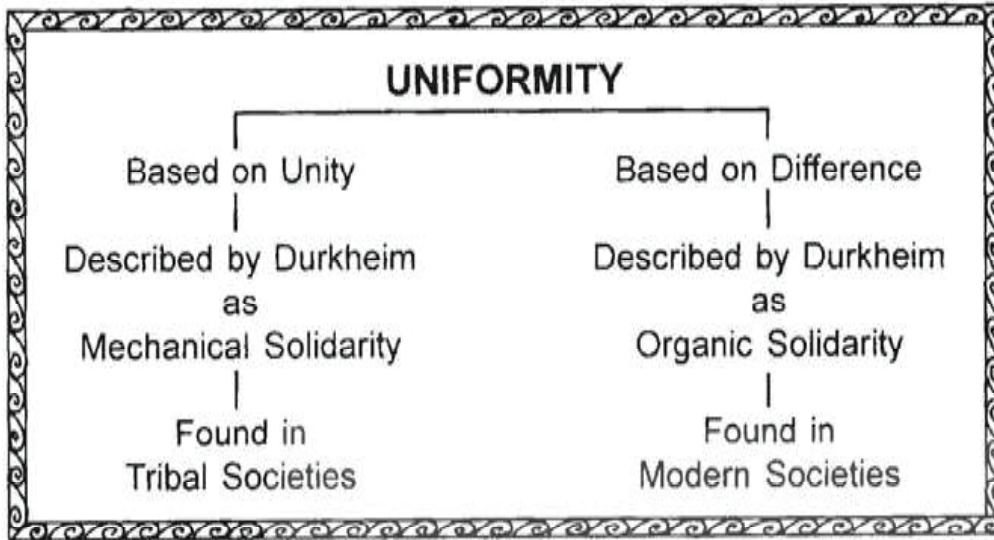
Figure 1.1: Two types of unity

The point to note is that unity does not have to be based on uniformity. Unity, as we noted earlier, implies integration. Integration does not mean absence of differences. Indeed, it stands for the ties that bind the diverse groups with one another.

Check Your Progress I

i) Mark which of the following is the correct meaning of diversity?

    a) Differences between two individuals

    b) Similarities among the members of a group

    c) Dissimilarities among groups.

ii) Mark which of the following is the correct example of social diversity?

    a) Temperamental differences between men and women

    b) Property differences between the two neighbours

    c) Differences of religious belongingness between two groups.

iii) Indicate which of the following statements are true and which are false.

    Use T for True and F for False.

    a) Unity means absence of differences.

    b) Unity is opposite of diversity.

    c) Uniformity is a necessary condition for unity.

    d) Unity in diversity is a contradiction in terms.

    e) Mechanical solidarity is based on uniformity.

    f) Unity signifies integration.

1.3 FORMS OF DIVERSITY IN INDIA

As hinted earlier, we find in India diversity of various sorts. Some of its important forms are the following: racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based. Let us deal with each one of them in some detail.

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1.3.1 Racial Diversity

You may have seen people of different races in India. A race is a group of people with a set of distinctive physical features such as skin colour, type of nose, form of hair, etc.

Herbert Risley had classified the people of India into seven racial types. These are (i) Turko-Iranian, (ii) Indo-Aryan, (iii) Scytho-Dravidian, (iv) Aryo-Dravidian, (v) Mongolo-Dravidian, (vi) Mongoloid, and (vii) Dravidian. These seven racial types can be reduced to three basic types–the Indo-Aryan, the Mongolian and the Dravidian. In his opinion the last two types would account for the racial composition of tribal India. He was the supervisor of the census operations held in India in 1891 and it was data from this census, which founded the basis of this classification. As, it was based mainly on language-types rather than physical characteristics; Risley's classification was criticised for its shortcomings.

Other administrative officers and anthropologists, like J.H. Hutton, D.N. Majumdar and B.S. Guha, have given the latest racial classification of the Indian people based on further researches in this field. Hutton's and Guha's classifications are based on 1931 census operations. B.S. Guha (1952) has identified six racial types (1) the Negrito, (2) the Proto Australoid, (3) the Mongoloid, (4) the Mediterranean, (5) the Western Brachycephals, and (6) the Nordic. Besides telling you what the various types denote, we shall not go into the details of this issue, because that will involve us in technical matters pertaining to physical anthropology. Here, we need only to be aware of the diversity of racial types in India.

Negritos are the people who belong to the black racial stock as found in Africa. They have black skin colour, frizzle hair, thick lips, etc. In India some of the tribes in South India, such as the Kadar, the Irula and the Paniyan have distinct Negrito strain.

The **Proto-Australoid** races consist of an ethnic group, which includes the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific Islands. Representatives of this group are the Ainu of Japan, the Vedda of Sri Lanka, and the Sakai of Malaysia. In India the tribes of Middle India belong to this strain. Some of these tribes are the Ho of Singhbhumi, Bihar, and the Bhil of the Vindhya ranges.

The **Mongoloids** are a major racial stock native to Asia, including the peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, the North Eastern regions have tribes of brachycephalic Mongoloid strain. A slightly different kind of Mongoloid racial stock is found in the Brahmputra Valley. The Mikir-Bodo group of tribes and the Angami Nagas represent the best examples of Mongoloid racial composition in India.

The **Mediterranean** races relate to the caucasian physical type, i.e., the white race. It is characterised by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with **cephalic index** (the ratio multiplied by 100 of the maximum breadth of the head to its maximum length) of less than 75 and dark (continental) complexion.

The **Western Brachycephals** are divided into the following three sub-groups: (1) The **Alpenoid** are characterised by broad head, medium stature and light skin, found amongst Bania castes of Gujarat, the Kayasthas of Bengal, etc. (ii) The **Dinaric –** They are characterised by broad head, long nose, tall stature and dark skin colour, found amongst the Brahmin of Bengal, the non-Brahmin of Karnataka, (iii) The **Armenoid**– They are characterised by features similar to Dinaric. The Armenoid have a more marked shape of the back of head, a prominent and narrow nose. The Parsi of Bombay show the typical characteristics of the Armenoid race (Das 1988: 223).

Finally, the **Nordic** races belong to the physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. They are found in Scandinavian countries, Europe. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country, especially in Punjab and Rajputana. The Kho of Chitral, the Red Kaffirs, the Khatash are some of the representatives of this type. Research suggests that the Nordics came from the north, probably from south east Russia and south west Siberia, through central Asia to India. (Das 1988: 223).

1.3.2 Linguistic Diversity

Do you know how many languages are there in India? While the famous linguist Grierson noted 179 languages and 544 dialects, the 1971 census on the other hand, reported 1652 languages in India which are spoken as mother tongue. Not all these languages are, however, equally widespread. Many of them are tribal speeches and these are spoken by less than one percent of the total population. Here you can see that in India there is a good deal of linguistic diversity.

Only 18 languages are listed in Schedule VIII of the Indian Constitution. These are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Out of these 18 languages, Hindi is spoken by 39.85 per cent of the total population; Bengali, Telugu and Marathi by around 8 per cent each; Tamil and Urdu by 6.26 and 5.22 per cent, respectively; and the rest by less than 5 per cent each as per 1991 census report (India 2003).

The above constitutionally recognised languages belong to two linguistic families: Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil and Telugu are the four major Dravidian languages. The languages of Indo-Aryan family are spoken by 75 per cent of India's total population while the languages of Dravidian family are spoken by 20 per cent.

This linguistic diversity notwithstanding, we have always had a sort of link language, though it has varied from age to age. In ancient times it was Sanskrit, in medieval age it was Arabic or Persian and in modern times we have Hindi and English as official languages.

1.3.3 Religious Diversity

India is a land of multiple religions. We find here followers of various faiths, particularly of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, among others. You know it that Hinduism is the dominant religion of India. According to the census of 1981 it is professed by 82.64 per cent of the total population. Next comes Islam, which is practised by 11.35 per cent. This is

followed by Christianity having a following of 2.43 per cent, Sikhism reported by 1.96 per cent, Buddhism by 0.71 per cent and Jainism by 0.48 per cent. The religions with lesser following are Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

While Hinduism saw a slight reduction in the percentage of their followers by the year 1991, most of the other religions increased their strength though by very narrow margin. According to the 1991 census the Hinduism has 82.41 per cent followers to the total population. 11.67 per cent followed Islam and 2.32 per cent followed Christianity. Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism followed by 1.99, 0.77 and 0.41 per cent, respectively. And 0.43 reported to follow other religions. (Census of India 1995, Series 1, Paper 1 on Religion).

Then there are sects within each religion. Hinduism, for example, has many sects including Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava. Add to them the sects born or religious reform movements such as Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Ram Krishna Mission. More recently, some new cults have come up such as Radhaswami, Saibaba, etc. Similarly, Islam is divided into Shiya and Sunni; Sikhism into Namdhari and Nirankari; Jainism into Digambar and Shvetambar; and Buddhism into Hinayan and Mahayan.

While Hindu and Muslim are found in almost all parts of India, the remaining minority religions have their pockets of concentration. Christians have their strongholds in the three southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and in the north-eastern states like Nagaland and Meghalaya. Sikhs are concentrated largely in Punjab, Buddhists in Maharashtra, and Jains are mainly spread over Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat, but also found in most urban centres throughout the country.

Check Your Progress II

i)   List, in one line, some of the major forms of diversity found in India?

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....

ii) According to Grierson, how many dialects and languages are spoken in India?

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....

iii) What are the various religions found in India? Use two lines for your answer.

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....
....

1.3.4 Caste Diversity

India, as you know, is a country of castes. The term caste is generally used in two senses: sometimes in the sense of Varna and sometimes in the sense of Jati. (i) Varna refers to a segment of the four-fold division of Hindu society based on functional criterion. The four Varna are Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra with their specialised functions as learning, defence, trade and manual service. The Varna hierarchy is accepted all over India. (ii) Jati refers to a hereditary endogamous status group practising a specific traditional occupation. You may be surprised to know that there are more than 3,000 jati in India. These are hierarchically graded in different ways in different regions.

It may also be noted that the practice of caste system is not confined to Hindus alone. We find castes among the Muslim, Christian, Sikh as well as other communities. You may have heard of the hierarchy of Shaikh, Saiyed, Mughal, Pathan among the Muslim. Furthermore, there are castes like teli (oil pressure), dhobi (washerman), darjee (tailor), etc. among the Muslim. Similarly, caste consciousness among the Christian in India is not unknown. Since a vast majority of Christians in India are converted from Hindu fold, the converts have carried the caste system into Christianity. Among the Sikh again you have so many castes including Jat Sikh and Majahabi Sikh (lower castes). In view of this you can well imagine the extent of caste diversity in India.

In addition to the above described major forms of diversity, we have diversity of many other sorts like settlement patterns – tribal, rural, urban; marriage and kinship patterns along religious and regional lines; cultural patterns reflecting regional variations, and so on. These forms of diversity will become clear to you as you proceed along this course. You will also learn about these aspects more elaborately in the next few Blocks.

Activity 1

What language do you speak and to which stock of languages does it belong? Find out what language/s/is/are spoken in the ten families living on the left side of your own family. Divide them according to the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian stock of languages. Write down all this information on a separate sheet. Compare your findings with those of other students at your study centre.

1.4 BONDS OF UNITY IN INDIA

In the preceding section we have illustrated the diversity of India. But that is not the whole story. There are bonds of unity underlying all this diversity. These bonds of unity may be located in a certain underlying uniformity of life as well as in certain mechanisms of integration. Census Commissioner in 1911, Herbert Risley (1969), was right when he observed: "Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type, language, custom and religion which strikes the observer in India there can still be discerned ..... a certain underlying uniformity of life from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin". We will describe the bonds of unity of India in this section. These are geo-political unity, the institution of pilgrimage, tradition of accommodation, and tradition of interdependence. We will now describe each of them in that order.

1.4.1 Geo-political Unity

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

Although it has not been recognised till recently, the geo-political unity of India was always visualized by our seers and rulers. The expressions of this consciousness of the geo-political unity of India are found in Rig-Veda, in Sanskrit literature, in the edicts of Asoka, in Buddhist monuments and in various other sources. The ideal of geo-political unity of India is also reflected in the concepts of Bharatvarsha (the old indigenous classic name for India), Chakravarti (emperor), and Ekchhatradhipatya (under one rule).

1.4.2 The Institution of Pilgrimage

Another source of unity of India lies in what is known as temple culture, which is reflected in the network of shrines and sacred places. From Badrinath and Kedarnath in the north to Rameshwaram in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east to Dwaraka in the west the religious shrines and holy rivers are spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Closely related to them is the age-old culture of pilgrimage, which has always moved people to various parts of the country and fostered in them a sense of geo-cultural unity.

As well as being an expression of religious sentiment, pilgrimage is also an expression of love for the motherland, a sort of mode of worship of the country. It has played a significant part in promoting interaction and cultural affinity among the people living in different parts of India. Pilgrimage can, therefore, rightly be viewed as a mechanism of geo-cultural unity.

1.4.3 Tradition of Accommodation

Have you heard of the syncretic quality of Indian culture, its remarkable quality of accommodation and tolerance? There is ample evidence of it. The first evidence of it lies in the elastic character of Hinduism, the majority religion of India. It is common knowledge that Hinduism is not a homogeneous religion, a religion having one God, one Book and one Temple. Indeed, it can be best described as a federation of faiths. Polytheistic (having multiple deities) in character, it goes to the extent of accommodating village level deities and tribal faiths.

For the same reason, sociologists have distinguished two broad forms of Hinduism: sanskritic and popular. Sanskrit is that which is found in the texts (religious books like Vedas, etc.) and popular is that which is found in the actual life situation of the vast masses. Robert Redfield has called these two forms as great tradition of Ramayana and Mahabharata and the little tradition of worship of the village deity. And everything passes for Hinduism.

What it shows is that Hinduism has been an open religion, a receptive and absorbing religion, an encompassing religion. It is known for its quality of openness and accommodation.

Another evidence of it lies in its apathy to conversion. Hinduism is not a proselytising religion. That is, it does not seek converts. Nor has it ordinarily resisted other religions to seek converts from within its fold. This quality of accommodation and tolerance has saved the way to the coexistence of several faiths in India. Mechanisms of coexistence of people of different faiths have been in existence here for long. Take for example, the case of Hindu-Muslim amity. Hindus and Muslims have always taken part in each other's functions, festivities and feasts. How did they do it? They did it by evolving the mechanism of providing for a separate hearth and a set of vessels for each other so as to respect each other's religious sensibility. This always facilitated mutual visiting and sharing in each other's joy and grief. They have also done so by showing regards for each other's saints and holy men. Thus, both Hindus and Muslims have shown reverence to the saints and Pirs of each other. And this holds as well for the coexistence of other religious groups like Sikh, Jain, Christian and so on.

Activity 2

Write the answers of the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and discuss them with other students at your study centre.

i) Give, at least one example, in each of the following areas, to show the blending of Hindu and Muslim cultures in India.

    a)   architecture

    b)   literature

    c)   music

    d)   religion

ii) Have you recently attended a wedding in a community other than your own? What has struck you as a markedly different feature, which is, absent during a wedding in your community?

1.4.4   Tradition of Interdependence

We have had a remarkable tradition of interdependence, which has held us together throughout centuries. One manifestation of it is found in the form of Jajmani system, i.e., a system of functional interdependence of castes. The term "jajman" refers generally to the patron or recipient of specialised services. The relations were traditionally between a food producing family and the families that supported them with goods and services. These came to be called the jajmani relations. Jajmani relations were conspicuous in village life, as they entailed ritual matters, social support as well as economic exchange. The whole of a local social order was involved (the people and their values) in such jajmani links. A patron had jajmani relations with members of a high caste (like a Brahmin priest whose services he needed for rituals). He also required the services of specialists from the lower jati to perform those necessary tasks like washing of dirty clothes, cutting of hair, cleaning the rooms and toilets, delivery of the child etc. Those associated in these interdependent relations were expected to be and were broadly supportive of each other with qualities of ready help that generally close kinsmen were expected to show.

The jajmani relations usually involved multiple kinds of payment and obligations as well as multiple functions.

Here it will suffice to note that no caste was self-sufficient. If anything, it depended for many things on other castes. In a sense, each caste was a functional group in that it rendered a specified service to other caste groups. Jajmani system is that mechanism which has formalised and regulated this functional interdependence.

Furthermore, castes cut across the boundaries of religious communities. We have earlier mentioned that notions of caste are found in all the religious communities in India. In its actual practice, thus, the institution of jajmani provides for inter linkages between people of different religious groups. Thus a Hindu may be dependent for the washing of his clothes on a Muslim washerman. Similarly, a Muslim may be dependent for the stitching of his clothes on a Hindu tailor, and vice-versa.

Efforts have been made from time to time by sensitive and sensible leaders of both the communities to synthesise Hindu and Muslim traditions so as to bring the two major communities closer to each other. Akbar, for example, founded a new religion, Din-e-Ilahi, combining best of both the religions. The contributions made by Kabir, Eknath, Guru Nanak, and more recently Mahatma Gandhi, are well known in this regard.

Similarly, in the field of art and architecture we find such a happy blending of Hindu and Muslim styles. What else is this if not a proof of mutual appreciation for each other's culture?

Quite in line with these traditional bonds of unity, the Indian state in post Independence era has rightly opted for a composite culture model of national unity rather than a uniform culture model. The composite culture model provides for the preservation and growth of plurality of cultures within the framework of an integrated nation. Hence the significance of our choice of the norm of secularism, implying equal regard for all religions, as our policy of national integration.

The above account of the unity of India should not be taken to mean that we have always had a smooth sailing in matters of national unity, with no incidents of caste, communal or linguistic riots. Nor should it be taken to mean that the divisive and secessionist tendencies have been altogether absent. There have been occasional riots, at times serious riots. For example, who can forget the communal riots of partition days, the linguistic riots in Tamil Nadu in protest against the imposition of Hindi, the riots in Gujarat during 1980s between scheduled and non-scheduled castes and communal riots of 2002? The redeeming feature, however, is that the bonds of unity have always emerged stronger than the forces of disintegration.

Check Your Progress III

i)   List the bonds of unity in India, in the space given below.

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ii)   Indicate the mechanism of the following set of terms, in the space provided against each.

   a)   geo-political unity ....

   b)   geo-cultural unity ....

   c)   religious accommodation ....

   d)   social interdependence ....

iii) Distinguish between great tradition and little tradition, in the space given below.

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iv)   Distinguish between composite culture and uniform culture models of national integratioin, in the space provided below.

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1.5   LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have studied that diversity refers to: i) patterned differences between groups, ii) socio-cultural variety, and iii) lack of uniformity. Unity means integration that may or may not be based on niformity, a sense of oneness arising from the bonds that hold the members together or that bind the diverse groups with one another.

You have also studied that there are major forms of diversity in India: race, language, religion and caste.

Underlying all the diversities there is a remarkable measure of unity. We have noted four bonds of unity in India: geo-political, geo-cultural, religious accommodation and functional interdependence. Closely related to these bonds are four mechanisms of integration: constitution, pilgrimage, provision of a separate hearth, cook and kitchenware for members of other religious community, and jajmani.

Finally, we have noted that India has opted for a composite culture model of unity rather than uniform cultural model.

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1.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   C

ii)   C

iii)   Statements a, b, c and d are false. Statements e and f are true.

Check Your Progress II

i)   Racial, linguistic, religious and caste-based.

ii)   179 languages and 544 dialects.

iii)   Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism.

Check Your Progress III

i)   Geo-political, geo-cultural, tradition of accommodation, interdependence.

ii)   a) constitution

      b) pilgrimage

      c) separate cook and kitchenware

      d) jajmani

iii)   Great tradition is sanskritic, based on sacred texts and scriptures, and elitist. Little tradition, on the other hand, is oral, village-based and popular.

iv)   Composite culture model provides for cultural pluralism while uniform culture model implies dominance of one culture.

UNIT 2   CHANGING INDIA*

Structure

2.0   OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the meaning and nature of social change;

- you will be able to describe the forms and processes of change in India by learning theories and concepts of change;

- examine factors that are at play in changing Indian society;

- provide a detailed explanation about the challenges faced by India and its responses and

- describe the nature in which India is changing structurally and culturally.

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In the first unit of this course, unit 1, Unit and Diversity in India, Block 1 India as a Plural Society, you learnt about the aspects of unity in India along with the aspects of diversities cross-cutting each other. This unit deals with 'Changing India'. Like all societies, India is also changing, accommodating new changes and growing steadfastly. You must have often come across people saying that

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*Dr. Ritu Sinha C.C.M.G, JMI, New Delhi and a Portion is adopted from IGNOU, BDP, ESO-12 by Archana Singh

India is changing. Elderly persons often point towards the unending changes since they were young and that everything around them is changing fast. If you can recall, it is often explained through stories, anecdotes, and exemplars, how the ways of living, practices, traditions, values, beliefs and even relationships have taken new shape over a period of time. They either grow or shrink with the passage of time. Changes are integral and inevitable to human societies.

2.2 MEANING AND NATURE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Change is a very broad concept. Though change is all around us, we do not refer to all of it as social change. Thus, physical growth from year to year, or change of seasons do not fall under the concept of social change. In sociology, we look at social change as alterations that occur in the social structure and social relationship. The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Science (IESS 1972) looks at change as the important alterations that occur in the social structure, or in the pattern of action and interaction in societies. Alterations may occur in norms, values, cultural products and symbols in a society. Other definitions of change also point out that change implies, above all other things, alteration in the structure and function of a social system. Institutions, patterns of interaction, work, leisure activities, roles, norms and other aspects of society can be altered over time as a result of the process of social change.

2.2.1 Three Aspects of Social Change

From these and other definitions of social change, we can see that:

i)   Social change is essentially a process of alteration with no reference to the quality of change.

ii)   Changes in society are related/linked to changes in culture, so that it would be sometimes useful to talk about 'socio-cultural change.

       Some sociologists, however, differentiate between social change and cultural change. Social change is defined as alterations in the social structure, (including the changes in the size of society) or in particular social institutions, or in the relationship between institutions. They feel that social change refers mainly to actual human behaviour. Cultural change, on the other hand, refers to variation in cultural phenomena such as knowledge and ideas, art, religion moral doctrines, values, beliefs, symbol systems and so on. This distinction is abstract, because in many situations it is difficult, or nearly impossible to decide which type of change is occurring. For instance, growth of modern technology as part of the culture, has been closely associated with alterations in the economic structures, an important part of the society.

iii)   Social change can vary in its scope and in speed. We can talk of small scale or large scale changes. Changes can take a cyclical pattern, e.g. when there is the recurrence of centralisation and decentralisation in administrative organisations. It can also be revolutionary. Revolutionary change can be seen when there is an overthrow of government in a particular nation. Change can also include short term changes (e.g. in migration rates) as well as long

term changes in economic structures. We can include in social change, both growth and decline in membership and size of social institutions. Change may include continuous processes like specialisation, and also include discontinuous processes such as a particular technical or social invention which appears at some point of time.

Change also varies in scope, in that it may influence many aspects of a society and Social Change can disrupt the whole social system. The process of industrialisation which affected many aspects of society is one such example. In contrast, the substitution of matches for rubbing sticks to start a fire had a relatively limited scope.

Some changes occur rapidly but others take a long time. Many of the Western nations took many decades to become industrialised, but developing nations are trying to do it more quickly. They do this by borrowing or adapting from those nations which have already achieved it.

Today most sociologists assume that change is a natural, inevitable, ever present part of life in every society. When we are looking at social change, we are focusing not on changes in the experiences of an individual, but on variations in social structures, institutions and social relationship.

2.2.2 Some Allied Concepts

Social change is seen to be a neutral concept. The two other terms that have often been allied with this concept are 'evolution' and 'progress'.

i)   Evolution expresses continuity and direction of change. It means more than growth. 'Growth' implies a direction of change but essentially in size or quality. Evolution involves something more intrinsic, a change not only in size but also of structure.

ii)   Progress implies change in direction towards some final desired goal. It involves a value judgement.

All changes are not evolutionary and all changes are not progressive. Discussion of the direction of change need not involve any value judgements. The diminishing size of the family, and the increasing size of economic units, are matters of historical fact. 'Social change' is a value-neutral term, in the sense that the sociologists do not study social change in terms of "good or bad", desirable or undesirable. One must admit, however, that it is a difficult task indeed to make a value-free critical analysis of changes taking place in the structure of a society

Check Your Progress I

i)   Define social change in two lines.

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ii) What are the main characteristics of social change? Use four lines for your answer.

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iii) Differentiate between the following terms:

Change, Evolution and Progress. Use six lines for your answer.

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2.3 SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The discourses on progress and development of societies and human beings are intrinsically linked to incessant change experienced by human society. It is evident that human societies are always in transition, experiencing variety of dynamic changes and passing through old stage to enter into new. They are ever changing; they grow, decay, expand technologically and develop. In this process they experience modifications in values, ideologies, the institutions and populations, undergo variation over the period of time. Therefore the study of society is intimately associated with the concept of change. Sociology from its inception recognized the themes of change as central to its subject matter. The founders of the discipline namely, August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Karl Marx, in their own ways interlaced this theme to the subject matter.

In the early sociological writings, the terms and notions of development and change are used interchangeably. A clear distinction could either not be made, or if made, they were treated as logically related terms. In many of the early sociological theories of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the notions of 'change', 'development', 'evolution' and 'progress' are sometimes confused or combined in a single term. In the mid twentieth century the terms 'change' and 'development' were primarily viewed in the context of 'modernisation'. Let us now look at the perceptions of some social thinkers on development and social change.

2.3.1 Development and Change as Interchangeable and Logically Related Terms

We will look at the perceptions of thinkers like Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber and Marx.

i) **Auguste Comte**: Auguste Comte tried to understand social changes that occurred in the early years of the industrial revolution as an evolutionary process. Evolution implies gradual transformation or change through a series of stages. The theory of evolution explains that societies pass through a number of stages starting from a simple form and becoming more complex as the process of evolution progresses. Auguste Comte put forward the idea of evolutionary change and also related the idea of progressive change through the development of intellect, in particular the scientific thought. He was of the opinion that the human mind, human society and human knowledge all went through a process of development and change, from metaphysical (non-scientific) to positivism (scientific).

ii) **Herbert Spencer**: Herbert Spencer treated human society as a biological organism and, therefore, tried to study 'development' in the sense of change from within. In his opinion, social bodies are like living bodies. Thus, with increase in size, their structural complexity too increases. Spencer propounded an analogy between society and an organism and between social and economic growth.

iii) **Emile Durkheim:** Durkheim conceived society in terms of an evolutionary scheme. He talked about social solidarity. By solidarity he meant the moral beliefs and ideas which defined the commonness underlying social life. Like a social evolutionist, he opined that in pre-industrial societies, mechanical solidarity was based on agreement and identity among people, while in post-industrial societies organic solidarity derived from agreement to tolerate a range of differences, conflicts being moderated through a variety of institutional arrangements. Division of labour was almost absent in pre-industrial societies, while it is highly specialised and categorical in modern societies. Durkheim tried to explain social change as the result of changes in the bonds of morality, which he called social solidarity. He also laid emphasis on the processes of social evolution. According to him, alterations in the modes of functioning of societies as organic wholes could be studied scientifically.

iv) **Max Weber:** He examined the question of development and change in the context of his study on capitalism. According to him, culture (people's beliefs and values) is the key element in development. Unlike Durkheim, he tried to find as to what it was in people's religious and ethical beliefs that had enabled societies which started with similar technological endowment to develop and change in quite different ways.

v) **Karl Marx**: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in contrast to Durkheim and Weber argued that the processes of social change and development were in their nature not gradual and evolutionary; rather they were characterised by conflict of interests among classes in society. They essentially talked about disequilibrium between the productive potential of a society and the distribution of goods and services among its members. Therefore, according

to this view, social change arises out of potential struggles and radical breaks in continuity, rather than from gradual evolution. Class struggle has been recognised as the driving force of social change and development.

2.3.2 Development and Change as Modernisation

We will look into the contributions of W. Moore, Mc Clelland and critics of the modernisation theory.

i)   **Wilbert Moore** (1951) understood social change as total transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into a technology-dependent social organisation, generally found in the advanced, economically prosperous and relatively politically stable nations of the western world. He described the general conditions for industrialisation which include change in values, institutions, organisations and motivations. According to the modernisation theory development takes place from within a society and follows essentially the same pattern in all societies. The end-result of development, according to the modernisation theorists, is prosperity and relative political stability.

ii) **David Mc Clelland** (1961), like Max Weber, emphasised that internal factors like the values and motives of the persons provide opportunities to shape their own destiny. Thus, the problems of backwardness, poverty, malnutrition etc. are vitally linked to traditional and non-traditional thought. Therefore, educational programmes and technical aid aimed at increasing the 'need for achievement' of the people of backward areas are needed to solve these problems. Mc Clelland's idea of the need for achievement crystallises this view of the motive force in social change in general and the industrialisation process as a particular case of social change. He concluded that modernisation or development could be achieved through a process of diffusion of culture, ideas and technology.

iii) **Critics of the Modernisation theory**: A.G. Frank (1967) opined that the modernisation theories are inadequate from the policy point of view, because they fail to define correctly the kinds of social and economic processes at work in the developing countries. Rejecting the western model of development, he asserted that it is not necessary that development would occur in all societies if they adopt the economic policies and parliamentary democracy on the pattern of west.

Check Your Progress II

i)   State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true F for false against each statement.

a)   All change is development.

b)   Early sociological theories by Comte, Spencer and Durkheim viewed development and change as interchangeable and/or logically related terms.

c)   According to modernisation theorists the end result of development is prosperity and political stability.

d)   Development refers to unplanned process of social change in modern times.

ii) How did Karl Marx and Friedrich Engles view social change and development? Answers in about five lines.

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iii) Tick mark the correct answer of the following question. Who among the following viewed human society as a biological organism?

a) Herbert Spencer

b) Max Weber

c) Emile Durkheim

d) Karl Marx

iv) Write any two criticisms of modernisation theory. Use seven lines for your answer.

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2.3.3 Social Change: Structural and Cultural

Therefore because of the limitations of these terms a more neutral term 'social change' is widely used to denote change or transformation in the structure and function of any society. Social change is an important aspect of larger cultural change. It appears to refer to almost all changes other than those that can be defined under political or economic change. But sociologists struggled to provide precise meaning. **Social change** means modifications in the social institutions, behaviour of people or in social relations in a group, community and societies. This will include **Structural changes** that are overall changes in the structure and institutions of society. Change in structure can also be small in scale for short span. Bottomore (1986:297) defined social change as 'change in social structure including the size of the society, or in social institutions or in the relationship between the institution.' Davis (1981:622) explains it as change in structure and function of any society. The causes can be economical, political, cultural, technological and even environmental. **Cultural change** on the other hand would mean 'variations in cultural phenomena, like, beliefs, ideas, creative expressions attitudes; religious, social and economic organizations; science and technology and every physical object created by humans (Dube, 1996:13). It is much broader and subsumes natural, social and psychological change.

2.4 UNDERSTANDING CHANGE IN INDIA

We can understand that India is changing if we unravel the processes and factors of change in India. 'Changing India' would literally mean experiencing difference in Indian society over a period of time. It will mean Indian society is in transition, continually transient and undergoing constant process of change. It implies idea of constant change is intrinsic to contemporary Indian society. It is imperative to find out the reasons for this unceasing change. Indian socio-economic and historic-cultural contexts provided basis for exploration of specific factors to understand change both at the cultural and structural levels in Indian context.

2.4.1 Factors of Change in India

You know Indian society is unique in its own ways. The vastness of plurality of traditions and the caste system makes it different on the world map. The changes of both cultural and structural types specific to Indian society are due to several factors. Contemporary India is a developing economy where there is a gradual shift from the established patterns of traditional society towards modernization through Industrial growth and development of modern technology, equipment and scientific knowledge. It is experiencing processes of economic growth, industrialization, urbanisation, and globalisation. Since these processes are still unfolding, India is experiencing continuous change both culturally and structurally. Let us learn about these processes briefly.

Colonisation is a process when technologically dominant people temporarily conquer other people, inhabit their land and exploit them for political, military and economic expansion and power. In India British took control over to establish their own empire. Alongwith technology they also transported modern legal and administrative system from Britain. The new system ushered changes in our political, economic and social structure. The impact of Colonialism therefore is far more than can be imagined. The far-reaching structural changes due to the impact of colonisation that also initiated cultural changes can be experienced in contemporary period too.

The unintended changes inherent in colonization were **Modernization and Secularization.** They are crucial factors in understanding the ongoing cultural changes in India. The western impact and rise of education lay the foundations for modernization in India during colonial period. M.N. Srinivas's **Westernization** explains the western impact at two levels. It includes all changes that happened with intellectual growth due to the spread of western education, liberal ethos and rise of middle class along with those that reflected in western ways of dressing, eating and adoption of cultural traits. Colonial encounters brought ideas of individualism, nationalism, ideas of freedom, rational and objective thinking. The basic application of such principles of modernity is modernization. Modernization in simple terms would mean a "process denoting a movement from traditional or quasi-traditional order to certain desired types of technology and associated forms of social structure, value orientations, motivations, and norms" (Dube 1996: 112). As Rudolph and Ruloph would argue 'this would mean adoption of universal and scientific thinking over the parochial and non-rational.' Modernization is when along with technological expansion; people's lives are regulated by choices and not by birth. **Secularization** is the process that emerges with modernization where religion is not the guiding

framework for human action and is less influential in the lives of ordinary people. Modern thinkers believed education, critical thinking and scientific advancement will contribute towards decline of religion and will give birth to scientific temperament in human societies. This did work so well in the Indian context.

2.4.1.1 Industrialisation and Urbanisation

In India, after Independence, Industrialisation was seen as key to achieving economic growth and development. Industrialisation is a process that ensures the growth of industrial society in contrast to the agriculture one by restructuring the economic system for manufacturing goods and services. Sociologically societies of industrial types were considered as developed where the human beings controlled the technological and natural growth, with extreme division of labour and prosperity. Or let us say societies that have experienced processes of modernisation, industrialisation and technological expansion. These are seen in contrast to the traditional societies, which are based on agriculture, less prosperous and rural in nature. Closely linked to processes of industrialization and modernisation is the process of **Urbanisation.** It is growth of cities and movement of people from rural areas to urban areas, such as towns and cities, where in place of agriculture, employment opportunities are linked to trade, manufacture and Industrial production. In comparison to villages, you must have noticed, cities have better educational facilities and increased economic activities. This is because they have definite cultural patterns, advanced economic, political structures and modern bureaucratic and administrative systems. Urbanisation explains the level of cultural change based on modernisation and are also structural by being an index of economic development. It amounts to change in patterns of behavior, modes of thinking, relationships and social institutions. Colonialism created new ones and ended earlier existing urban centres of India and industrialisation.

2.4.1.2 Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG)

The process of liberalisation, privatisation and globalsation are processes that you must have heard in your school. Popularly known as LPG these are inherent in the logic and processes of economic growth and reform in India. The new economic phase in India began with Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation. **Liberalisation** is the shift in the whole range of economic policies of a country, resulting into privatisation and Globalisation. The state opens up its economy to the world market by reducing control over the economic activities to improve the efficiency and growth of the economy. It was carried out in India to resolve the economic crisis that country was facing in 1990s. The opening of the markets to private players, especially foreign companies and investment in the areas where mostly government invested like, education, power, civil aviation, etc., came to be known as **Privatisation.** Essentially it is transfer of control from public to private sector. **Globalisation** is free flow of goods and services, ideas, information, technology and people across the globe. At present this flow of goods is mostly from the first world to third world countries when they open up their market for global trade. According to Albrow (1990:45), "Globalisation refers to all those processes by which people of the world are incorporated into a single world society." It is to develop interdependence amongst societies, culture, economies, nations and people. It means to go beyond the boundaries of nation state and to develop global interconnectedness. Giddens (1990:65) says, "Globalisation is the intensification of world-wide social relation which link

distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa."Globalisation has economic, cultural and political dimension. Economic and financial dimension includes Liberalisation and Privatisation. The process involves rise in multinational and trans-national companies that seek global profit.It is a process of transformation that is still unfolding differently in different parts of the world.

2.4.1.3 Mass Media and Information and Communication technology (ICT)

This is the crucial factor of modernisation and development in India. It has both personal and social consequences. You know that the advent of technologies of communication in India was during the British period. Printing, telegraph, postal services, telephone, radio and even cinema, all came during this period and were instrumental in bringing about unforeseen changes like rise of public spheres that is the rapid spread of communication and awakening of people to the fact of being exploited by the colonial masters etc. and political struggle for freedom. Television came up in early decades of independence with broadcast rights with the government and emerged as a powerful political, cultural and economic tool. The coming of computers and later mobile phone made us enter in a new era of social media and digital communication. After LPG, the mass media entered into a different phase and there is massive rise of information and communication technology (communication satellite, fibre Optics, cables etc.,). Information technologies one of the major processes of network society and interconnectedness in the global world. Knowledge and Information led global market allowed Multinational corporations like Murdoch's News Corp to completely transform the scenario in India and in the entire south. Mass media and information technologies play crucial role in creating the dominance of developed nations. Matos argues that mass media has caused 'cultural imperialism of the west by importing their formats and genre, cultural values like individualism and capitalist consumerism' (2012:2). This enormous shift in mass media overall has transformed the economic, political and cultural practices in India.

2.4.1.4 Social Movements

Social Movements caused change in multiple ways in the past as well as in the present. They occur due to certain societal conditions and aims at improving it by bringing transformation in the social structure. Broadly, any organised and sustained collective action with shared ideology and objectives aiming to bring change in society can be called as social movement. In colonial period movements demanded reform in existing social practices, expressed assertions of indigenous culture over the western, community rights and identity and freedom from colonialism. In post Independent India, movements demanding social justice and equal distribution of power in the past, social and economic inequality, marginalisation of women and weaker sections, issues related to community and religious identity, cultural and also social problems; have existed. Some of the famous movements are like the Bhakti movement; movement against sati pratha or for wider remarriage, Peasant movements in northern India and so on. There are three types of movements as Rao (2000) suggests, reformist, transformatory and revolutionary. Shah (2008:30) classifies them on the 'basis of socio-economic characteristics of the participants and issues involved.' They are Peasant, Tribal, Dalit, Backward caste, Women's, Industrial working class, Student's and Middle class movements.

Check Your Progress III

i)   Explain the meaning of modernisation in one line.

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ii)   Is adoption of western ways of thinking and living westernisation?

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iii) What is LPG?

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2.5   CHANGING INDIA: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

It must be clear to you that sociologically societies are never static and are for ever changing. India cannot be unchanging if understood sociologically. Contemporary India is a developing economy where there is a gradual shift from the established patterns of traditional society towards modernisation through Industrial growth, development of modern technology, equipment and scientific knowledge. It is experiencing ongoing processes of industrialisation, urbanisation, and globalisation. Since these processes are still unfolding, India is experiencing continuous change both culturally and structurally.

In a society like India that underwent colonialism and achieved independence through freedom struggle, Singh (1996:1) argues, concept of social change was ideological where it ceased to be a process but was desirable to be achieved.

Here change became synonymous to growth and progress. Therefore, since Independence change was visualised as economic growth and progress, and the expansion of education and it was believed that scientific thought process will gradually bring social and cultural changes. Such ideas of transformations encapsulated the vision of the western paradigm of modernisation and capitalist model of economic growth. Therefore the responses to factors of change are complex and pose immense challenges. Let us have a closer look.

The rise of western liberal values of democracy, social justice and nationalism during colonialism led to the framing of Constitution for independent India. Firstly, social change was promised by constitution as part of modernisation process. It recognised that India is multi religious and multicultural. It attempted to bring unity in diversity through core values of democracy and democratic institutions. India aimed to become developed industrial society on the foundation of such constitutional framework and set out to fight structural inequality and provide justice for all sections of society. The changes were both orthogenetic and heterogenetic in nature. Let us briefly throw light on how have the villages and urban spaces changed since independence.

2.5.1 Changing Rural India

Rural India has undergone several changes since independence. The agrarian reforms along with development were the goals of Indian government. Reforms caused end of bonded labour, change in the mode of payment from kind to cash and the rise of free wage and agricultural labourers that according to Breman (1974) caused a shift from 'patronage to exploitation'. Villages are merging into towns under massive sway of urbanisation and globalisation, are no more 'Little Communities'. There is decline in traditional occupation and increased commercialisation has led to newer interconnections with rural and urban economies. This urban-folk continuum has given rise to diverse occupation and circulation of labour or seasonal occupation. The great traditions of the literate elites seem to control the little traditions of rural folks and there is continuous process of communication in two traditions in some areas. Agriculture is no more the single occupation for rural people. Amidst all this there are significant changes since state's support for agriculture has reduced and agricultural issues are not capturing the attention of media and wider nation. The farmers are no more celebrated in the national culture of India since India after LPG is more service driven and less dependent on agriculture. More than seventy percentage of GDP is coming from the service sector after the 1990's than from agriculture sector

Have you heard about farmer's suicide that started amongst cotton growing farmers of Vidarbh and later in parts of Uttar Pradesh and gradually in rest of India? These suicides reflect on the changes in the economic policies and changing rural India. Lets try to understand this phenomena. The land revenue system of colonial India led to huge variation in agrarian structure across India. This was encountered by agrarian reforms in independent India under planned development. Reforms like Green revolution in 1960s and 70s brought uneven growth with increased inequality among the farmers. Later Liberalisation and Globalisation established the norms of World Trade Organisation. The crops were grown for the commercial market leading to increased commercialization of agricultural produce since it had to compete in the global market. The excessive persuasion

of development model based on modernisation and industrialisation has led to decline in indigenous methods and technology, causing greater difficulty in affording the new technology.

Marginalisation of agriculture and disintegrated movements has changed the trajectory of rural social structure. The hegemony of the elites and upper castes continues and inequality persists at all levels.

2.5.2 Changing Urban Spaces

The urban spaces have undergone massive changes. The industrialisation caused expansion of cities, technological revolution and rise in mass media. This has altered the ways of living massively. The mixed economy policy was followed in independent India leading to government control of some sectors like power, transportation, etc. and some opened to private industrialists. It also supported small-scale industry policy. Post LPG, the rise of service sectors have resulted in the growth of urban middle class and also urban poor that mostly constitute people from rural places, mostly lower castes and class mainly less educated.

The development and globalisation has changed the landscape of cities. The rise in new material culture is evident in the cities and cultural transformations are huge. The skyscapers, multinational companies and commercial complex showcasing international standards are the new reality of the urban spaces. The dominance of private corporations and less intervention of government has altered labour conditions, giving rise to structural inequalities of gender, caste and class, increasing insecurity and steep competition. This has caused change in values, beliefs and norms. Modernisation has given rise to education, skill based profession and high degree of specialisation leading to division of labour to suit the capitalist model of development.

The process of Sanskritisation has led to rise in education and growth of majoritarian culture and middle classes. It is still much visible amongst the newly educated sections and in urban poor. The tension between the 'cognitive elements of western culture and Indian minds rooted in traditional Indian social structure persists and there is slow change in the 'ideo-structure' of society. Modernisation and its encounter with tradition in urban spaces, like rural India, is visible in cultural contradictions but mostly in hidden ways. Mukherjee's dialectical approach explains this contradiction. He says these contradictions have given rise to conflict as well as cohesion or synthesis. This cultural contradiction and synthesis defines the culture of society at present. Cultural contradictions in food, occupation, fashion, gender relations, ritual practices and festivals and many such areas is much visible.

Check Your Progress IV

1) State true and false for the following statement.

   a) Agriculture is still the main part of economy

   b) Villages are shrinking with increase in Urbanisation.

   c) Skyscrapers are part of rural change

   d) Liberalisation is change in range of policies.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we learned about changing India by understanding the meanings of change by various concepts, approaches and theories.

We learned that societies are in different phases of change due to varying external and internal reasons. Changing India involves understanding of several factors. Some of these are continuous processes. Since it aims to experience progress like developed nations, it is evident, that here change is bound with human knowledge, power of science and technology and the process of modernisation that entails changes in views, beliefs and ideals towards more universal ones. There is uneven development and slow process of modernisation in India as it is still grappling to overcome the conflict between tradition and modernity and therefore even after massive urbanisation and globalisation India is ridden with structural problems.

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2.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   Social change refers to the alterations that occur in the social structure, and social relationships in a society.

ii)   Social Change is essentially a process of alteration, with no reference to the quality of change. Changes in culture are related to changes in society. Changes also vary in scope and speed.

iii) Evolution expresses continuity and direction of change, implying change not only in size but also of structure. Progress implies change in a desirable directions. Change on the other hand is considered to be a value neutral concept which refers to alterations in both structure and social relationships in a society.

Check Your Progress II

   i) a) F

       b) T

       c) T

       d) F

   ii) According to Marx and Engles social change and development are characterized by conflict of interests among classes in society. They argued that social changes arise out of potential and radical breaks in continuity, rather than from gradual evolution.

   iii) a

2) Modernisation theories argue that each society's development problems can be understood only in relation to its place in the world system. But it is not proved that all developing countries follow the same path of development of already developed countries. Modernisation theories fail to define conclusively the kinds of social and economic process at work in the developing countries.

Check Your Progress III

   i) Following principles of modernity in most basic sense is modernisation

   ii) Yes

   iii) Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation

Check Your Progress IV

1) a) F

    b) T

    c) F

    d) T

Further Readings

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Block 2
Social Structures and Practices
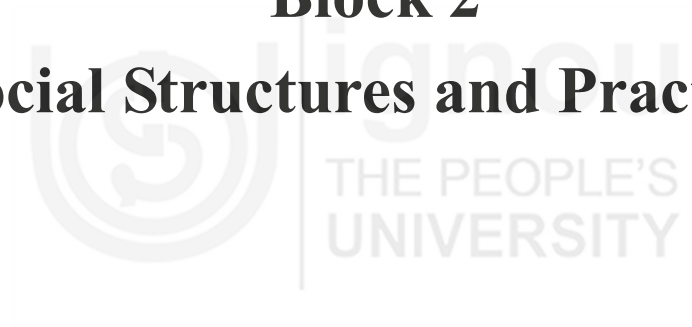
BLOCK 2   INTRODUCTION

The Second block, **Social Structures and Practices** discusses about three different aspects which define society in India. These are **Tribes, Caste and Class**. We explain to you the nature of tribes in India. How they exist and are assimilated in the larger society. The challenges that they face in their day to day lives and their response to these challenges. Caste is another form of social stratification which is unique to Indian society. Unlike caste, class is an open form of social stratification and prior to Independence in India, we found that caste and class were subsumed with one another. However, due to the Colonial impact and especially after Independence when our Constitution was formed, we find that the provisions of our Constitution has led to rapid social mobility in society and this has led to the caste identities and class identities becoming separate from each other in society in India.

UNIT 3 TRIBES*

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

* describe the distinctive characteristics of the tribes in India;

* discuss the socio-economic conditions of tribals;

* explain the agrarian policies, land laws and land alienation among Tribals;

* discuss the regulations and resistance; and

* describe the new kind of struggle on the issue of land.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit on "Changing India" which explained about social change in contemporary India. Here in this unit, we focus on social structure like tribes castes and classes found in India. Here in this unit 3 "Tribes", we have exclusively described the Tribes or "Jan Jati's" in India.

Tribes in India have been studied and written about by many scholars. In this unit we shall discuss some of the major issues concerning the tribal communities in India. They are largely excluded from the mainstream of social life and are often deprived of their indigenous sources of livelihood. They are quite frequently uprooted from their socio-cultural traditions. They experience loss of their dignity and .independence. The government policies have had both negative and positive impact on tribal societies resulting in varying tribal responses to these policies. The great deal of concern among the policy-makers continues to be for the tribal upliftment.

*Dr. T. Gangmei, Delhi University, Delhi

3.2 UNDERSTANDING TRIBE

Derived from the Latin term *tribus*, the term tribe means an inhabited place. It denotes a group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor. The term 'tribe' (Munshi, 2013) was used by the colonial government in India to categorize a large number of groups different from the term caste. The term tribe subsumes communities very different from one another in terms of demographic size, linguistic and cultural traits, ecological conditions and material conditions of living. The tribes are essentially 'primitive', and 'backward' in character. After independence, the term, 'Scheduled Tribe' (ST) came to be used to denote tribes who are scheduled as such under the Constitution of India. The tribal communities are distinguished from other communities by relative isolation, cultural distinctiveness and low level of production and subsistence. They are the native inhabitants. There are several terms used for them like 'adivasi' (first settler), 'vanvasi' (inhabitants of forests), 'vanyajati' (primitive people), 'Janjati' (folk people), and 'anusuchit jati' (ST).

W. H. R. Rivers defines tribe as "a social group of a simple kind, the members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government and act together for such common purposes as warfare." (Chaudhury, 1977)

The Census of India 2011 notifies Scheduled Tribes in 30 States of India. The number of individual ethnic groups notified as Scheduled Tribes is 705.

Box 3.1: The Tribals and the British Policy

The British policy towards the tribals had two major elements. Firstly, it favoured isolation of the tribal areas from the mainstream (Bhowmick 1980; Chaudhuri 1982). Thus was given the concept of 'excluded' and/or 'partially excluded areas'. Because the British tribal policy was political and colonial, the British administration feared, that if these tribals (bow-and-arrow armed tribals were often labeled as militant, unruly and jungle) were to have contact with the mainstream of Indian society, the freedom movements would gain further strength. In this background it seemed logical to them to isolate, administratively and politically, the regions that had predominantly tribal populations. Secondly, at the level of reform, the British administration was interested in 'civilising' these people. In an ethno-centric assessment, the tribals were viewed at part with stage of bestiality. The classical theory of evolution, which had gripped academic attention in late nineties and early twenties, had treated the 'contemporary primitives' as the remnants or survivals of the early stages of humanity, savagery and barbarism. In the words of Sir, E.B. Tylor, these people inhabiting the hilly or forested terrain with sparse population and difficult communication were 'social fossils'; a study or whom would illuminate the prehistoric phases of human existence (IGNOU (Reprint): 2017 ESO-12 Block 6, Tribes in India)

3.2.1 Distinctive Characteristics of the Tribes in India

1) **Definite common topography**

Tribal people live within a definite topography and it is a common place for all the members of a particular tribe occupying that region. In the absence of a common but definite living place, the tribals will lose other

characteristics of a tribal life, like common language, way of living and community sentiment, etc.

2) Sense of unity

Sense of unity is an invariable necessity for a true tribal life. The very existence of a tribe depends upon the tribal's sense of unity during the time of peace and war.

3) Endogamous group

Tribal people generally do not marry outside their tribe and marriage within the tribe is highly appreciated and much applauded. But the pressing effects of changes following the forces of mobility have also changed the attitude of tribals and now, inter-tribal marriages are becoming more and more common.

4) Common dialect

Members of a tribal community exchange their views in a common dialect. This element further strengthens their sense of unity.

5) Ties of bloodrelationship

Bloodrelationship is the greatest bond and most powerful force inculcating the sense of unity among the tribals.

6) Protection awareness

Tribal people always need protection from intrusion and infiltration and for this a single political authority is established and all the powers are vested in this authority. The safety of the tribal is left to the skill and mental power of the person enjoying political authority. The tribal chief is aided by a tribal committee in the events of contingencies. Tribe is divided into a number of small groups and each group is headed by its own leader.

7) Distinct political organisation

Every tribe has its own distinct political organisation which looks after the interests of tribal people. The whole political authority lies in the hands of a tribal chief. In some tribes, tribal committees exist to help the tribal chief in discharging his functions in the interests of the tribe.

8) Common culture

Common culture of a tribe derives from the sense of unity, which depends on sharing a common language, common religion, common political organisation. Common culture produces a life of homogeneity among the tribals.

9) Importance of kinship

Kinship forms the basis of tribal social organisation. Most tribes are divided into exogamous clans and lineages.

10) Egalitarian values

The tribal social organisation is based on the principle of equality. Thus there are no institutionalised inequalities such as in the caste system or sex

based inequalities. Thus men and women enjoyed equal status and freedom. However, some degrees of social inequality may be found in case of tribal chiefs or tribal kings who enjoy a higher social status, exercise political authority and posses wealth.

11) **Simple form of religion**

Tribes believe in certain myths and a rudimentary type of religion. Further, they believe in totems-which is at symbolic object signifying objects having mystic relationship with members of the tribe.

Check Your Progress I

i)   Give the definition of tribe. Use about five lines for your answer

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ii)   List at least two major characteristic of tribes.

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3.3   SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF TRIBALS IN CENTRAL INDIA

The tribal communities, especially in the central belt of India, are characterised by declining access to land and other resources due to land alienation and increased diversion of forest and other common property resources for development projects. As a result, a disproportionately high percentage of the tribal population has been displaced from their traditional pattern of livelihood without proper rehabilitation. (Sarap, 2017)

Of the total 104.3 million people belonging to various tribes (705), about four-fifths live in the heart of India comprising the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha and West Bengal (Government of India, 2011). The socio-economic conditions of the tribals living in these states are, in several ways, different from those living in northeast India. That is, since these are predominantly forest-based areas with high concentration of poverty, the tribals in these regions stand, both socially and economically at a much lower level as compared to those in northeast India. The problem of poverty confronting them is multidimensional in nature including income, and human vulnerability. (Kannan & Raveendran, 2011; Radhakrishna 2015, and Sarap, 2017).

The adivasis living in the hinterland of the states are characterised by low level of asset holding, low level of human capital, lack of political participation in the decision-making process and no political voice (De Haan & Dubey, 2005). In addition, they are subjected to multiple deprivations (Bakshi, Chawla & Shah, 2015) and human vulnerability. (Sarap, 2017). Major causes of tribal poverty are lack of access to secure productive resources, such as land, forests, other common property resources like grazing grounds, ponds, tanks etc. Most important is their insufficient participation in the decision-making process. The loss of entitlement to resources has not only affected their livelihood but also made them poorer. There is continuous erosion in their access to different types of resources on which the tribals depend for their livelihood. The level of poverty among the tribal communities central India is higher as compared to other regions. (Radhakrishna, Ravi & Reddy, 2013). They are marginalised because of **land alienation and indebtedness** (Sarap, 2017). There is distress sale of their agricultural and forest products by middlemen to the local traders. Even the tribal labour as marketed (Sarap & Springate-Baginski, 2013). The **state-sponsored programmes** have poor performance in tribal areas. Their performance in forms of human development like health education and training is ineffective (govt. of India 2014). The **literacy rate** among tribal communities is rising but at a slow pace, as compared to other communities in other nations. (Sarap, 2017) There is difference in the levels of literacy among different tribal communities in addition to the difference between male and female literacy rates of tribal people. The health indicators like infant mortality, morbidity, skilled health care, are the worst. **Female-headed households** can be seen amongst tribed community. The **child poverty and disadvantage based by women are very high.** The women themselves suffer from multiple burdens of being located in remote areas in disadvantaged groups. They receive insufficient access to education and quality of health care (De Haan 2004) The World Bank, 2011). The tribal households tend to be poorer inspite of various welfare programmes and some changes in their demographic, occupational and educational levels. (Kijima, 2006). The tribal dominated areas in central India are characterised by poor access to roads, markets, medical and educational facilities. The infrastructural deprivation of tribal areas increases both transportation and transaction costs of production and marketing of commodities, and creates difficulty in accessing basic services for the tribal people. The remoteness of tribal areas precipitates their commercial and transnational problems. This reduces the possibility of the transformation of tribal economy. Given the low agricultural productivity and low returns for their labour (Kijima, 2006, see Sarap, 2017), the net surplus available to the tribal people is marginal or negative. The adivasi regions are rich in mineral and other resources but, historically, the tribal communities have been denied a share of this wealth. Such resources are owned by them as they are found under the land they possess but they are excluded from the use of small resources. They are not permitted to extract minerals and water resources for power generation and irrigation. As a result, they have been displaced and subjected to 'adverse incorporation', which has pushed them to the lowest rungs of the social hierarchy (Chatterjee, 2008). In tribal areas, there is absolute deprivation as a result of loss of land and habitats, and from the fragmentation of homesteads due to dams, mines and industries (Munshi, 2012, see Sarap, 2017). These adverse changes have led to dispossession of individuals and communities. There is also the relative deprivation resulting from lack of opportunities, that is, social exclusion from the processes and benefits of developmental programmes.

There are number of factors including policies, as discussed below, responsible for decline in the conditions of livelihood of the tribal communities.

3.3.1 Issues Relating to Access to Livelihood

Access to the source of livelihood of the tribal people depends on sectoral institutional and governmental (supports). They should not only improve their sources of livelihood but also facilitate mainstreaming i.e bringing them closer to other people and integration of tribal communities with other communities and societies. There is also a need to enhance their capacities. The governmental policies including agrarian, forest and development policies are crucial for providing these communities with opportunities for their sustainable socio-economic development (De Haan & Dubey, 2005)

3.3.2 Agrarian Policies, Land Laws and Land Alienation among Tribals

The land as a major source of livelihood plays a direct and an indispensable role in agricultural production and prosperity but the agrarian policies of the states have been relatively ineffective in broadening the access to this source of livelihood to a large section of tribal population. The reason can be attributed to the fact that post independent. Indian states have encouraged private property regime but the state property regime continued and the communal land tenure system was not accepted. As a result, land not settled as private property automatically became state property which included forestland also (Ekha, 2011; Kumar & Kherr, 2013; Sarap & Sarangi, 2010). Although the forestland was primarily owned by the tribal communities. In many adivasi areas, requisite surveys were never done. Thus, people's rights over vast tracts of land were never recognized, though the land was customarily owned by these tribal communities (Xaxa,2007, Sarap,2017). Further, the increasing pauperisation and marginalisation of peasantry has been affecting the livelihood of the tribals. The National Sample Survey Office data shows an increasing trend of landlessness among the tribal households, leading to their pauperisation. The percentage of households without any cultivated land (landlessness) has been increasing. It is noteworthy that the percentage of households that do not have cultivated or agricultural land increased from 28 per cent in 1987–88 to 39 per cent in 2011–12 (Karat & Rawal, 2014). Similarly, adivasi households that do not possess any land have increased from 13 to 25 per cent and such households that do not own any land have increased from 16 to 24 per cent during the same period (Sarap, 2017).

Check Your Progress II

i)   Discuss briefly the socio-economic conditions of tribals from central India. Use five lines

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ii)   Do the tribals in central India have access to forest land?

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3.4   TRIBES AND FOREST

Some tribal groups practice hunting and food gathering as their sole occupation but majority of them are cultivators and agricultural labourers. The rest are engaged in household industry, construction work, plantation, mining and quarrying and in other services. A small section of them receives benefits from the protective measures of the government, such as, reservation in educational institutions, employment and political reservation but majority of them are marginalized by the process of so-called development of the last seven decades since independence (Munshi ibid).

Most tribal groups derive their livelihood from agriculture and forest as compared to non-tribal agricultural communities. Their dependence on the forest serves variety of purposes. The dependency on forest and other natural resources is substantial. Their agricultural activities are closely interlinked with the forest. The forest has been, and continues to be, a major source of food, timber for house construction and agricultural implements, fuel wood, medicines, and other necessities of everyday life. The leaves, fruits, flowers, roots, tubers from the forest constitute an important supplement to the otherwise meager diet of the tribals, especially during the lean season and periods of drought. Wild fruits, berries and honey are collected and eaten. The bamboo and timber are necessary for making agricultural and fishing tools. The herbs serve as serve as medicines for several ailments; The oil and soap are also gathered from the forest. Around fifty to eighty percent of food requirements of the tribals may, in fact, be provided by the forest. The sale of forest produce like bamboo, fuel wood, *tendu* leaves (leaves plucked from its shrubs used to wrap *bidi/cigarette*) and variety of nuts are important sources of income. The tribal people have the belief that gods and spirits reside in the forest, trees and animals. They are also their object of devotion. The forest resources are the major sources of material and spiritual existence of tribal communities (ibid).

There are several regulations passed in the mid-nineteenth century during the colonial rule; with the object to protect and regenerate forests for ecological reasons and to facilitate the production of timber on a sustainable basis, for both revenue and imperial purposes. The laws relating to the management of forests and forest produce were subsequently consolidated in the **Indian Forest Act of 1927.** This resulted in the large scale restriction on the removal of fuel wood and bamboos and prohibition of shifting cultivation. In many instances, grazing lands were included into 'unreserved' and 'protected' forests, thereby seriously affecting the existing grazing arrangements. The creation of a large scale of

'reserved' forests in India under the control of the state, supervised and managed by the forest department resulted in the restriction of the customary rights of the forest communities endangering their very survival. These communities suffered great hardships at the hands of forest officials who enforced the restrictions with great severity and even a minor breach of regulation was treated as a crime.

The forest management introduced by the British resulted in the enhanced commercial value of the forest and opened up an important source of revenue for the government. The increasing demand from urban centers, military cantonments and hill stations, from the railways, and the rising commercial value of teak and other minor forest produce added to the economic value of the forests. The increased policing by the forest department inevitably resulted in more and more forest crimes and offences being committed by those dependent on the forest.

The land and forest under tribal control were brought under state control and management. During the colonial rule and after independence, lineage/ village ownership of land was not recognised. In addition, the non-recognition of shifting agriculture as a legitimate agricultural practice existed except in the north east. Paradoxically, the post colonial Indian state has continued with the colonial policy with the result that lakhs of shifting cultivators have no legitimate rights over the forests that have been their own for centuries.

The traditional rights of the tribal people over land and forest were neither recognised nor recorded. The creation of national parks and sanctuaries on forest lands further excluded these communities from their survival base. The conservation of the flora and fauna was recognised as an urgent need but the settlement of tribal rights to forest and its produce was not undertaken with sincerity and seriousness that it deserved and those who continue to use forest land were deemed 'encroachers', stripped of any security rights (ibid).

3.4.1 Loss of Land and Livelihood

There was loss of the source of livelihood since the tribals were kept away from the shifting cultivation as it was considered wasteful and destructive but the British government considered it as a source of regular revenue, and therefore, the tribals were encouraged to take up land for cultivation but on lower rates of assessment. However, the lack of agricultural implements, poor quality of soil, frequent crop failure and rigid revenue demands, often forced the cultivators, both tribals and non-tribals, to turn to money lenders to provide them with money at high rates of interest to buy seeds, consumption items, and even money to pay revenue to the government. in several parts, the trend of increasing indebtedness and transfer of land for cultivation to the money-lending classes increased. In this way, a powerful class emerged which amassed large amounts of land and wealth through combined activities of money-lending, trading and liquor selling. This trend reduced the tribals to the position of bonded labourers and tenants. Thus, from a low subsistence, the tribals became totally dependent on the landlord – money lenders, traders, shopkeepers, for their survival. The **exploitation and oppression** by the money-lending class not only reduced them to extreme poverty but also removed their self respect.

3.4.1.1 Loss of Land and Livelihood in Pre-Independent India

The necessary pre-condition for the dependence and bondage was the alienation of the adivasis from their means of subsistence, forest and land and other resources. Their alienation was almost complete by the end of the 19th century. In many parts of the country, the tribals joined the non-tribals to revolt against the local oppressors and administrators. They demanded land, forest rights, lower taxes, lower prices for food etc. In spite of the legislations preventing alienation amomg the tribals, they continue to lose their land and the sources of their livelihood.

3.4.1.2 Loss of Land and Livelihood in Post-Independent India

The decade following Independence were the decades of intense development planning in India. This was also the time of marginalization of tribal communities from mainstream development through the agenda of nation building centered around industrialisation and urbanisation. What accompanied this process was building of large dams, large industrial complexes, infrastructure, opening of mines and forest for the market and over exploitation of natural resources to satisfy the expanding urban and industrial demands in the tribal inhabited areas where most of the rich natural resources lie. The adverse effect this process on tribals in India has been reported by the International Alliances of Indigenous Peoples of the Tropical Forests. It was reported that the building of industries, mines, townships, dams, forest depots was both by decision and default imposed on the tribal people. The tribal communities carried the burden of the economic growth of the nation. The land acquisition, a piece of colonial legislation, used to acquire lands for the Crown. It was the power as a tool in the hands of the colonial state to take over the resources to divert their benefits to the advanced and advancing sections (Munshi 2013). More than 10 million people were displaced and lost all that they had and millions of tribal communities to the brink of ethnocide. There was a simmering discontent in almost the entire middle Indian found themselves pushed to the brink in the tribal belt, particularly on the issues of land and forest and their alienation from these. In some cases there was a near confrontation between the people and the state marked by intermittent eruption of violence. The tribal people are continuously losing command over their resources in almost all counts with utter disregard of their traditional rights over land and national resources. There was virtually forced displacement in favour of a variety of development projects (Munshi , 2013).

The public and private sectors undertakings, development projects and industries have contributed to the process of impoverishment of the tribals. The state which is supposed to protect their interest has immensely contributed to their exploitation. The depletion and destruction of forest have eroded the already fragile survival base of the tribal communities. The most affected are the tribal women who must now work harder to meet the fuel, water, food and fodder requirements of the family and their cattles. A large number of tribals are forced to migrate seasonally or permanently to other rural areas, urban fringes, or cities in search of work opportunities because of being deprived of their traditional sources of their livelihood. They constitute a large army of 'footloose workers, a part of the expanding unorganised sector, with little security and protection (ibid).

It is noteworthy that the situation in the north-east tribal belt differs from that of central and southern India. Except Tripura, Assam and Manipur, this region did not experience much migration even in colonial days. Athough in more recent times, alienation of land and other resources has occurred. But it is not as widespread as in the rest of the country, in particular by the central tribal belt. The tribals in this region, according to Pathy, control the resources for their survival. The tribals are in majority in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. They struggle here also but they have little to do with land alienation and expropriation of resources by the state. They focus more on their political involvement. (ibid).

The policy of globalisation and liberalisation has only accelerated the process of alienation of the tribals from their natural resources and created greater insecurity for them. The free movement of human resources, commodities, finance and technology across national, regional and local boundaries have adversely affected these communities. It is observed that large scale transfer of tribal land is going on. This alienates them from their land. There is now a move to amend the fifth schedule and structure of forest management projects in order to include the interests of large private firms like the Indian Tobacco company in Andhra Pradesh. The Jindals have procured tribal land through *benami* transactions in Chhattisgarh for their steel plant. The Sahara Housing Limited grabbed 3,760 acres of tribal and forest areas in Maharastra for a tourism project. (ibid).

The government has effectively carried out a massive eviction of tribal people in order to clear the way for the big multinational mining companies and their Indian partners, who are coming to India to exploit its iron-ore, coal, bauxite uranium and other bio-diversity. The Odisha government has already given mining rights for iron and steel production to 35 companies, including a grant to POSCO and to large number of aluminium companies. Mining and quarrying has recently attracted a lot of attention. It has emerged as a major profit-making industry often combining force and fraud, legal and illegal means to carry out its activities. Although, mining areas are the site of violent political clashes between the local people on the one hand, and the private capital and the state on the other. The ecological destruction, loss of traditional livelihood of tribals and their displacement have taken place. Chhattisgarh is one such site which has witnessed clashes between the local people and police. In fact, this place has also seen the massive state repression to crush the Maoist influence in the region. It is reported that in the first four and half decades after independence, mining had displaced about two and a half crore people, and less than 25 per cent of them had yet been rehabilitated. More than 50 per cent belonged to tribal communities. It was estimated that 1,64 lakh hectares of forest land has already been diverted for mining in the country (ibid).

The tribals protests led by Maoists have brought to the centre stage the problems of continuing illegal acquisition of land from scheduled areas by private interests as well as the state, and the resulting alienation of tribal communities from their resource base. The areas most politically volatile are those which are forested and rich in other natural resources, and which have been home for tribal communities (ibid).

Box 3.2: Impact of Industrialisation

The installation of industries in Santal dominated areas was another very important factor of change and modernisation. These industries provided jobs to both educated and illiterate and offered a new source of mobility. Moreover, these industries were free from one or another or religious domination. They promoted caste-free and class-free occupation. A large number of Santal found jobs in them. These industries, having recruited local tribals; provided an opportunity to the people to further cement their traditional linkages: in fact, these industries were the 'world of kinsmen'. Santal identity was further strengthened by the tribal-workers.

The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution grants tribals complete rights over their traditional land and forests and prohibits private companies from mining on their land. Only a small number of tribals have benefitted from the welfare measures of the state. A small proportion of young adivasi men and women do not want to continue with their traditional lifestyle but majority of the tribals feel they are deprived of their traditional sources of livelihoods against their wishes. They are forced to take up employment which offer them little security and quality of life.

Thus, millions of tribals have been displaced in the last few decades making way for development projects, industrial activities, forest conservation and the processes of development to proceed unhindered. However, these developments are but all at the cost of tribals. The short-sighted policies of the states have resulted in destruction of natural resources and displacement.The experiences of the tribal communities can best be described as the 'loss of nerve.' After displacement, the resettlement of the tribals is a painful experience because the conditions in the resettlement sites are often so abysmal that the majority of the tribal people want to return to their villages, kin group, forest areas where they may feel satisfied. They may also like to move out of resettlement to work as casual labour in plantation and industries and as domestic servants, rickshaw-pullers and construction workers in the alien surroundings (Munshi ibid).

3.4.2 Regulations and Resistance

There has been, of late, a growing awareness of the environmental problems facing the country, especially the depletion of our forest resources. The conflict and tension is growing among contending tribal groups because of deprivation and lack of access to resources and power. (Guha, R. 2013).

The task of fullfillment of tribal 'rights; and the loss of their control over their natural resources have evoked a sharp reaction from the tribal forest communities. There have been revolts in different tribal areas centered around the question of forests since the early days of forest administration. For instance, in Garhwal, the **reservation of forests in 1913** was followed by extensive **social movements in 1916** and **1921**, coinciding with the first non-cooperation movement, engulfing large areas of Garhwal and Kumaon. These upsurges forced the government to de-reserve large forest areas. The discontent among the tribal people due to forest restrictions manifested in the unwillingness of the villagers to cooperate with the Forest Department in its task of forest conservation (ibid).

The state in many areas has made over some forests as village forests under the settlement for the use by villagers but the loss of community ownership of forests

had effectively broken the link between man and forest. This alienation of man from forest can be compared to the alienation of the primary producer being separated from the means of production as conceived by Karl Marc. As a result, there were sporadic forest movements in Tehri Garhwal since the early years of the century. This history of conflict and struggle can be seen essentially as emanating from alienation, property rights and obligation (ibid).

3.4.3 New Kind of Struggle on the Issue of Land

A new form of struggle on the issue of land has started within some of the tribal communities where the tribal women are struggling to gain ownership rights to land. The denial of land rights to tribals/ adivasi women has been a matter of great concern. The studies by Kishwar on Ho tribal community (1987:200) argue that Ho men's increasing control over land and other income generation activities has resulted in 'greater exploitation of Ho women despite women's far greater contribution to the family's livelihood. There are instances of tribal women like the Santhals of Bihar who are supported by men from the tribal community to launch a campaign to fight for their right to land (Munshi 2013).

3.4.4 Tribal 'Unrest'

With increased forest exploitation, the forest tribal communities have experienced a progressive loss of their control over their habitat. This deprivation can be observed in a series of social movements. There has been intermittent uprisings in the fifties and sixties. Currently we find 'unrest' in most areas. These movements, ranging from Uttarakhand in the north to Jharkhand in the east and Thane/ Dhulia in the west, have been studied and reported. The increasingly militant struggles have centered around the question of regaining community control over land and forest. The state's reaction has been one of increased repression and the use of armed force to suppress these movements as was the case of the Gua firings of 1980. The state has given greater powers to armed forces, forest department and police bureaucracy (Guha, R.2013).

Check Your Progress III

i) Briefly explain the major livelihood awareness of tribal people in India. Use ten lines

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ii) How did the processes of globalisation affect the tribals living in the forests?

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3.5   LET US SUM UP

In this unit you came to know the conditions of tribals in India. The meaning and characteristic of tribes was described .They have their own myths, lengends, problems and the sense of identity with the natural resources. We explained how the developmental programmes have adversely affected the tribal communities, including their traditional pattern of agriculture and natural sources of their livelihood. The demarcation of fencing of large tracts of reserved forest has enforced effective loss of control by the tribal forest-dwellers over their habitat and resources of their existence. The development of tribal communities and their natural resources base, their skills, practices, traditions, knowledge, aptitudes and wishes.

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3.7   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   i)   The term tribe derives from the Latin word "tribers" which refers to an inhabited place. It singnifies a group of persons who belong to a community claiming a common descent from a common ancestor…….

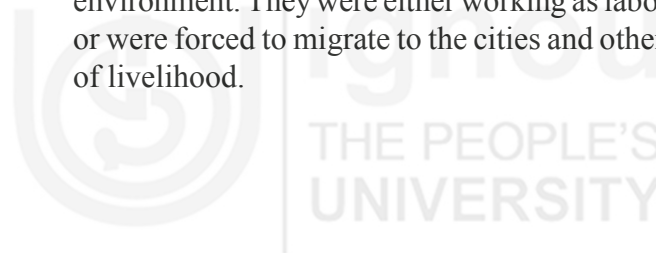They all share the same language, cultural distinctiveness and relative isolation.

ii) A sense of unity and a common dialect are two major characteristics of tribes.

Check Your Progress II

i) Tribal people especially belonging to central India faced land alienation and disruption of their traditional pattern of livelihood in the very process of development since large projects such as industrial and mining led to their access to land being barred from them.

ii) No the tribals in Central India lost their traditional rights over the access to forest land during the colonial period as well as the contemporary times.

Check Your Progress III

i) Some tribals were living on hunting and food gathering but a majority population were cultivators and agricultural labourers. Many were engaged in household industry, mining work, plantation etc.

ii) In pose-Independent India the processes of globalisation and liberalisation adversely affected the tribals whose customary rights on forest lands was lost wich left them deprived and pauperized and alienated from their environment. They were either working as labourers/miners/domestics etc. or were forced to migrate to the cities and other regions looking for source of livelihood.

UNIT 4 CASTE*

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit; you should be able to:

- define caste and describe its features;

- discuss the theoretical approaches to the understanding of caste;

- describe Jajmani system and its association with caste system;

- discuss major changes and the elements of continuity in the caste system;

- explain Caste system's influence on Indian political system; and

- discuss the measures taken to reduce caste discrimination.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Caste is a system of social stratification. It lies at the roots of Indian social structure. It involves ranking according to birth and determines one's occupation, marriage and social relationships. There is a prescribed set of norms, values and sanctions which govern social behaviour within caste.

Sociologists have defined caste (locally referred to as "jati") as 'hereditary, endogamous group, which is usually localised. It has a traditional association with an occupation and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of

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* Dr. Shailey Bhashanjali

pollution and purity, and general maximum commensality that occurs within the caste" (Srinivas 1962). This is the definition of the ideal form of caste system. In reality, however, there are variations in the structure and functioning of caste system.

It is imperative to make a distinction between the theoretical formulation of caste system and its existential reality. Theoretically, caste stratification of the Indian society has its origin in the Varna system. This system literally means colour which was prevalent during the Vedic period. According to this doctrine of colour, the Hindu society was divided into four main Varnas : Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. A fifth category of untouchables lie outside the fold of the varna scheme. This was mainly based on division of labour and occupation. Members of each varna performed different functions like the priestly function rulers, fighters, traders and servile. The varna system is important because it provides an all-India macro structural scheme within which innumerable variations of castes are found. A varna may include different castes which may be divided into different sub-castes.

The concept of Varna is generally traced to the *Purusha Sukta* Verse system of the Rig Veda. It said that Varna system originated by the sacrifice of the primeval being or Purusha. After the sacrifice, the Brahmana emerged from the mouth, the Kshatriya from arms, the Vaishya from thighs, and the Sudra from the feet. Thus, the four Varnas that emerged were considered to have a divine origin.

4.2 FEATURES OF CASTE SYSYTEM

Ghurye (1962) an eminent sociologist, identified six features of caste system. These six features are:

4.2.1 Segmental Division of Society

The Hindu society is divided into different castes. Caste membership is determined by birth and not by selection and accomplishments. Hence, caste status is termed as being ascribed (by birth).

4.2.2 Hierarchy

Caste system has a specific scheme of social preference in which they are arranged in a social and ritual hierarchy. A sense of high and low, superiority and inferiority is associated with this gradation or ranking. The Brahmins are placed at the top of the hierarchy and are regarded as ritually pure or supreme. The untouchables, considered most impure, are at the lowest rung of the hierarchy. In between are the Kshatriyas, followed by the Vaishya. Thus, castes occupy a specific status in the overall framework of caste hierarchy.

4.2.3 Restrictions on Feeding and Social Interaction

Rules are laid down which govern the exchange of food which is also called commensality and social interaction between different castes. There are restrictions on the kind of food that can be eaten together, received or exchanged among castes. A Brahmin will accept "pakka" food, i.e., food prepared in 'ghee' from any community but he cannot accept 'kachcha' food i.e food prepared in water at the hands of other caste. Concept of pollution places severe restrictions on the extent of social interaction.

4.2.4 Civil and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of Different Sections

Each caste is considered to be more pure or impure than the other in the ritual sense of the term. The ideology of pollution and purity regulates the relationship between different castes significantly. There are several taboos practised by the superior castes to preserve their ceremonial purity.

Castes considered ritually impure were subjected to manifold disabilities. For example, they were forbidden to use public roads, public well or enter Hindu temples. The shadow of some castes were considered polluting, such as, in Tamil Nadu the Shanars or Toddy-tappers had to restrict their pace away to 24 steps from a Brahmin during the earlier times.

Each caste has its own customs, traditions, practices and rituals. It has its own informal rules, regulations and procedures.

4.2.5 Restrictions on Marriage

Endogamy or marriage within one's own caste or sub-caste is an essential feature of caste system. Generally, people get married within their own caste or sub-caste. However, there were a few exceptions. In some regions of India, the upper caste men could marry lower caste women. This kind of marriage alliance is known as hypergamy.

4.2.6 Lack of Unrestricted Choice of Occupation

Traditionally each caste was associated with an occupation. They were ranked higher and lower on the basis of ritual purity and pollution of their associated occupation. The Brahmins who occupied the uppermost rank were prescribed the duties of acquiring and teaching sacred knowledge and of performing sacrifices.

The above is a description of the essential features of caste system. However caste structure has several variations as found in its functioning in different regions of India. As a regional reality, one can see different patterns of caste-ranking, customs and behaviours, marriage rules and caste dominance.

Each caste had its own caste council or panchayat where the grievances of its caste members were heard. Caste panchayat was regulating the behaviour of the caste people according to the prescribed norms and sanctioned social behaviour. Headed by the elders of that caste, these councils had the power to ex-communicate a member if he did not follow caste restrictions. They are distinct from village *panchayats* in that the latter, as statutory bodies, serve all villagers regardless of caste, although they operate on the same principles

Box 4.1

Dumont is critical of those who tried to explain caste in terms of politico-economic factors where caste was seen as a system of domination and exploitation. He, for example, criticizes F.G. Bailey, who in his book on 'Caste and the Economic Frontier' (based on his field work in Orissa), has argued that there was a high degree of coincidence between politico-economic ranks and the ritual ranking of caste. This is a reflection of the general rule that

those who achieve wealth and political power tend to rise in the ritual scheme of ranking. It is what is meant by saying that the ranking system of caste groups was validated by differential control over the productive resources of the village.

4.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF CASTE

Let us examine the attributional and interactional approach employed by scholars to the understanding of the caste system.

i) The attributional approach to caste analyses caste in terms of the various immutable characteristics of caste. The sociologists such as G S Ghurye, J H Hutton, using this approach, define caste system through its significant features. The above section includes the six features of caste system as described by Ghurye.

In his book 'Caste in India', (Hutton) held that the central feature of the caste system is endogamy. Around this fact various restrictions and taboos are built up. The interaction among various castes do not violate these restrictions placed on the various castes. Another important feature of the caste system as seen by Hutton is the taboo on taking cooked food from other than their own castes. M N Srinivas chooses to study the structure of relations arising between castes on the basis of these attributes. Thus, he introduces a dynamic aspect of caste identity.

ii) Interactional approach takes into account how castes are actually ranked with respect to one another in a local empirical context. According to Bailey caste dynamics and identity are united by the two principles of segregation and hierarchy. He feels that "Castes stand in ritual and secular hierarchy expressed in the rules of interaction". By secular hierarchy he meant the economic and political hierarchy, rituals being part of the religious system. The ritual system overlaps the political and economic system. Bailey (1957) explained his viewpoint with reference to village Bisipara in Orissa. He has shown how the caste situation in Bisipara is changed and becomes more fluid after Independence when the Kshatriyas lost much of their land. This caused a downslide in their ritual ranking as well. There was a clearly discernable change in the interaction patterns, such as, the acceptance and non-acceptance of food from other castes.

Marriot studied the arrangement of caste ranking in ritual interaction. He confirmed that ritual hierarchy is itself linked to economic and political hierarchies. Usually economic and political ranks tend to coincide. That is to say both ritual and non-ritual hierarchies affect the ranking in the caste order though ritual hierarchies tend to play a greater role.

Dumont added a new dimension to the study of caste in an interactional perspective. According to him the local context has a role in caste ranking and identity, but this is a response to the ideology of hierarchy which extends over the entire caste system. For Dumont caste is a special type of inequality and hierarchy is the essential value underlying the caste system. It is this value that integrates Hindu society .The various aspects of the caste, says

Dumont are based on the principle of opposition between the pure and impure underlying them. 'Pure' is superior to the 'impure' and has to be kept separate.

Caste

Box 4.2

> The effect of this participation on caste as an adaptive institution is clearly two fold: a conservative one on the internal social organisation of caste which will tend to preserve its integrity to mobilise more effectively; and a more creative one in its external relations to other castes as they attempt to maximise their share of scarce resources to power, prestige and wealth, and evolve a "civil politics of primordial compromise". For the very interdependence brought about by the market economy and democratic politics gives groups the power of contravailing the objectives of the others. The first effect will tend to conserve caste loyalties, the second to create broader ones. Thus Lynch concludes: "The very process of modernisation itself brings forth and exacerbates the competing loyalties of citizenship and caste statutes in the struggle of a new state to become a nation."

The theoretical position of caste in the analysis of Indian social systems is highly complex. It constitutes both a structural unit of social stratification as well as a system. The distinction between the two would depend upon the level of analysis involved. Sociologists who look across the cultural view of caste have, right from the beginning, associated it with an autonomous principle of stratification the bases of which are; institutionalised inequality, closure of social system in respect of social mobility, an elementary level of division of labour legitimized on ritual bases of reciprocity, and emphasis on quality (ritual purity or racial purity) rather than performance. In other words, caste is associated with an autonomous form of cultural system or world-view. The history of this view of caste goes far back in sociological literature (see Dubois 1906; Nesfield 1885: O'Malley 1932; Weber 1952; Kroeber 1930 etc.) and the trend still continues (see Berreman 1967; Barth 1960; Davis 1951; Myrdal 1968; etc.).The important assumption merely a variant of the principle of stratification which may be found working, not only in India, but in other societies too. An important implication of this view, as we find in the writings of Davis, A.R. Desai (1966) and Bose (1968) and others is that being a structural reality i.e. being part of the social structure caste would disappear when society in India evolves to a higher level (see Singh 1968) of industrialisation. A simple understanding of the structural view of caste is that it forms an ideal type of stratification system and as such it could exist forever, either alone or in coexistence with other forms of stratification in societies. This viewpoint is held by sociologists who take a structural-functional rather than evolutionary-historical view of social stratification. (Singh, Yogendra 1997. pp.32)

Thus a distinction can be made between sociologists who treat caste as a cultural phenomenon and those who define it as a structural phenomenon. Each of these positions has a further subvariation based on one's view of caste: whether it is a particularistic phenomenon, Indian in substance, or whether it has universal properties. Thus four approaches emerge as logical classes once we distinguish between the two levels of theoretical formulation, that is, cultural and structural and universalistic and particularistic.

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4.3.1   Caste and Class

In Indian society, caste and class as two different forms of social stratification have often been found to overlap with each other. Yogendra Singh (1997) mentions that in India class is often subsumed by caste. While caste is perceived as a hereditary group, a social class is a category of people who share a similar socio-economic status in relation to other segments of their community or society. Andre Beteille (1965), on the basis of his study of caste and class in Sripuram in South India found that the relation between caste and class has been a dynamic one. In the traditional system, there was greater congruence between caste and class. But the class system has gradually been dissociating itself from the caste structure. One can now achieve a variety of class positions with different degrees of probability, whatever one's position in the caste structure may be. However, caste, class are also closely linked with the power structure which is reflected in terms of the ownership in ship of property, such as, land and political and economic standing in society.

Activity 1

From your discussion with your family/friends make a list of characteristics which you believe to be related to caste. Discuss with other students at your study center.

4.3.2   Jajmani System

The term Jajmani System was introduced into the Indian social anthropology by William Wiser (1937) through his pioneering work, 'The Hindu Jajmani System'. In his study of a village in Uttar Pradesh, he discovered how different castes interacted with one another in the production and exchange of goods and services. It was found that, with some variations, this system existed throughout India.

Based on the agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services, Jajamani system is the link between the landowning high caste groups and occupational castes. It could be said that the Jajmani system is a system of distribution whereby high caste land owning families are provided services by various lower castes such as carpenter, barber, sweeper, etc.

It is a system of economic, social and ritual ties between different caste groups in the village. Under this system there are patrons and service castes. Since caste has a traditional association with an occupation, the castes are interdependent on each other for securing multiple services.

The servicing castes are called Kamins while the castes served are called Jajmans. For services rendered, the servicing castes are paid in cash or in kind (grains, fodder, clothes, animal products like milk, butter, etc.). The Rajput, Bhumihar and Jat are the Patron castes in the North and Kamma, Reddi, and Lingayat in the South. The service castes comprise barber, carpenter, blacksmith, washermen, leather-worker, etc. Relationship under Jajmani was permanent and hereditary. Oscar Lewis mentions that each caste group within a village is traditionally bound to give certain standardised services to the families of other castes. While the landowning high caste families receive services from lower castes and, in return, the members of low castes receive grains.

Jajmani system has undergone many significant changes in the past decades. In the village, not every caste participates in this system. In addition to the jajmani

relation, there has always been contractual, wage labour type of ties between the providers of goods and services and their buyers. Introduction of cash economy has also brought about changes, because payments in the jajmani system were in kind rather than in cash. New opportunities have come up in towns and cities, and many occupational castes have moved to cities to participate in these opportunities. The influence of life style, modern education, improved transport and communication has led to a decline in Jajmani system. Barter system of exchange is now almost extinct. Now payment is made in the form of cash. Broad changes in the caste system have also come in the way of the functioning of the traditional institution of Jajmani system.

Check Your Progress I

i)   Define caste and mention at least three features of caste system in India.

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ii)   What is the meaning of attributional approach towards the understanding of caste? Use five lines to answer.

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4.4   CHANGE AND CONTINUITY WITHIN CASTE SYSTEM

By definition, caste system is viewed as a rigid and closed system of stratification. That is there is no movement or mobility from one caste status to the other. Social mobility is the process by which individuals or groups move, either upwards or downwards, from one social status to another in the social hierarchy. In reality, social mobility has been an important feature of caste system. This clearly means that caste system is a dynamic reality with flexibility in terms of its structure and function.

The concept of Sanskritisation which is basically a process of social mobility was developed by M N Srinivas to describe the dynamic nature of the caste system. In his path-breaking study, Religion and society among the Coorgs (1952), M N Srinivas explained caste mobility in terms of cultural emulation of the

Brahmins or other demin cut castes by the local lower castes. He defined Sanskritisation as "a process by which a "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group changes its customs, ritual, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, frequently "twice-born" caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community." William Rowes' study of the Noniya in Senapur village in eastern Uttar Pradesh shows the success of a middle level caste in acquiring upward mobility through Sanskritisation after achieving economic prosperity. A clear example of Sanskritisation is the emulation of the practice of "twice-born castes" such as, vegetarianism by those so-called "lower castes". This paved way for mobility to occur within caste system. However, lower castes aspiring to climb upwards in caste hierarchy have to face hostility from the higher castes.

Along with Sanskritisation, the process of Westernisation has also made social mobility possible. Westernisation refers to all cultural changes and institutional innovations in India as it came into political and cultural contract with the western nations especially British. It includes establishment of scientific, technological and educational institutions, rise of nationalism, new political culture and leadership in the country. Many higher castes gave up traditional customs and adopted the life style of the westerners.

The process of industrialisation and urbanisation (migration of people from villages to cities) affected caste structure to a great extent. Industrial growth provided new sources of livelihood to people and made occupational mobility possible. With new transportation facilities, there was frequent communication. People of all castes travelled together and there was no way to follow the prevalent ideology of ritual purity and pollution between castes. Taboos against food sharing started weakening when industrial workers from different castes lived and worked together.

Urbanisation and growth of cities also changed the functioning of the caste system. Kingsley Davis (1951) held that the anonymity, congestion, mobility, secularism and changeability of the city makes the operation of the caste virtually impossible. Ghurye (1961) holds that changes in the rigidities of the caste system were due to the growth of city life. M N Srinivas (1962) holds that due to the migration of Brahmins to the towns, the non-Brahmins refused to show same respect to them which they showed before, and inter-caste eating and drinking taboos were also weakened. Quite significantly, the superiority of the Brahmins has been challenged, once considered a religious dogma and was based on birth, is no more so, as it was in the past.

Besides industrialisation and urbanisation, other factors which emerged after Independence in the country significantly affected the caste system. Various political and economic policies and reforms were initiated after Independence in the country which led to several changes after Independence. The socio-religious reforms and movements, merger of some states spread of modern education, growth of modern profession, spatial mobility and the, spread of market economy accelerated the process of modernisation and development. Consequently, changes and the process of social mobility in the caste system gained momentum.

There were occupational opportunities which were ritually neutral. Entry into these new occupations were based on the technical skills imparted through modern

education. When people from different castes came together in modern occupational settings and had close interaction, it gave a serious blow to the ritual, heredity and hierarchical structure and   aspects of caste.

Under the caste system, endogamy was the basis of mate-selection. The members of a caste or sub-caste were forbidden by non changing social laws to marry outside the group. But at present the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have removed restrictions of endogamy and declared inter-caste marriages as legally valid. Of late, several factors such as impact of western philosophy, co-education, working together of males and females of different castes in the same factory or office have contributed to an increase in the cases of inter-caste marriages, love-marriages and late-marriages and live-in-relationship.

Ram Krishna Mukherjee (1958) stated that both the economic aspect (change in occupational specialisation) and the social aspect (adoption of higher caste customs, giving up polluting professions, etc.) of the caste system, have vastly changed the caste system. He said that change is more specific in urban areas where rules on social interaction and, caste commensalities have relaxed and civil and religious disabilities of lower castes have been lifted. There are scholars of the viewpoint that changes are taking place gradually within the caste system but they are not disintegrative of the system as a whole. Ghurye (1961) was of the opinion that caste has shed some of its features. He said, that "caste no longer rigidly determines an individual's occupation but continues to prescribe its norms about marriage within the caste. One still has to depend very largely on one's caste for help at critical periods of one's life, like marriage, birth and death." He believed that strength of the caste system in social life is as strong today as it was earlier. Although Andre Beteille has referred to the changes taking place in the caste system in terms of its structural distance between castes, style of life, commensality and endogamy. Scholars have also said that caste has lost its traditional elements of purity and pollution and became more of an identity group. (Sharma, K)

4.4.1 Caste and Politics

The phenomenon of dominance of one caste over the other was an important factor in the maintenance of the caste system. Traditionally, economic and political dominance coincided with the ritual dominance. According to Srinivas (1966) a caste is said to be dominant when it is numerically the strongest in the village or local area and it economically and politically exercises a great influence. Such factors combine to place a particular caste group in a position of political dominance.

Sociologists have undertaken political analysis in terms of caste and traced the political development of caste through time. They have analysed the role of caste and its linkage to politics to gain political power. The system of parliamentary democracy, adult franchise, democratic decentralisation and the system of Panchayati Raj have taken politics down to the grassroots level where caste becomes a prominent variable in electoral politics. The demands of organised party system in politics have brought about a coalition of castes. The caste-based politics has promoted caste and importance of caste in politics. The caste has been the mobilizing, as well as, the unifying factor for political gains, material welfare, social status and caste alliances. (See Kothari, R. (ed.) 1970: *Caste in Indian Politics,* Orient Langman, New Delhi)

The modern political system is universal by the Constitution and it does not take into account the caste factor in privilege but in practice, on the ground level, caste considerations have come to occupy a predominant position in the democratic political process. The Political consciousness on caste lines is evident in references made to caste sabhas or caste associations and their role in Indian politics and political mobilisation.

Rajni Kothari has examined the relationship between caste and politics. He found the factors of education, government patronage and expanding franchise have penetrated the caste system, affecting the democratic politics in the country. The Economic opportunity, administrative patronage rising consciousness, is changing social attitudes Recognition of new opportunities and the rising consciousness and aspirations have drawn caste into politics and political mobilisation.

The different parties and movements mobilise caste based status groups as resources for their political interest. Very often candidates are fielded by political parties on the basis of their caste identity. The caste provides a readymade system of mobilization and support for the organised party politics. There are various caste federations which provide an organised political platform to fight for their common course. For example, the Kshatriya Sabha of Gujarat is an illustration of an active caste federation. It consists of clusters of castes or Jatis, that functions like a caste-based political community. Thus, caste is a factor of political significance and it is closely interlinked with politics.

4.4.2 Measures to Prohibit Caste Discrimination

After Independence the spread of education and social reform movements played a significant role in emancipation of socially and economically backward castes and classes. It is through them and various other legal constitutional measures the discrimination based on caste and other factors was prohibited. Our Constitution is based on democratic values of equality, liberty and fraternity. It does not allow any discrimination. In order to fulfil the Constitutional mandate, several Acts were passed in the Parliament to end the exploitative and discriminatory practices against lower castes. The government of India has enacted laws to remove untouchability. It has also brought in many reforms to improve the quality of life of the weaker sections of society. Some of them are:

i)   the Constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights;

ii)   the Abolition of ' untouchability' in 1950;

iii)   the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 and

iv)   the Provision of reservation in educational institutions, employment and other opportunities;

v)   the establishment of the department of Social Welfare and National Commissions for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes and the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, renamed as Protection of Civil Rights Act, in 1976.

The SC & ST Act, 1989 is one of the important measures to check, deter and prevent activities against them. There is also an Act, 2013 for the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation. This Act aims to prohibit the employment of manual scavenging, the manual cleaning of sewers

and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of unhygienic latrines. The Act seeks to rehabilitate manual scavengers and seeks to provide alternative employment to them.

Activity 2

Discuss with your friends about the legal measures and different steps that our Constitution provides to stop caste discrimination in Indian society. Write a report of a page on this discussion and discuss it with your peer group at your study center.

The Constitution of India provides measures for protective discrimination under various articles to facilitate the process of creating an equalitarian society. The Constitution gives preferential treatment to Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. Thus reservation was a strategy to give them a share in power, politics, services, employment and in order to uplift them socially and economically. In 1950, the Constitution provided 12.5% reservation for SCs and 5% for STs but later in 1970, it was raised to 15% for SCs and 7.5% for STs. The reservation was provided in jobs, admission to educational institutions and central and state legislative assemblies. Accordingly, all state governments enacted laws to provide reservation for the SCs and STs in services and other areas in the state. There is special provision for Other Backward Classes OBCs) made in the Constitution of India wherein the term OBC is used for them. Article 15(4) of the Constitution refers to them as 'socially and educationally backward classes of citizens'. Article 340, refers to them as 'socially and educationally backward classes'. Article 16(4) refers to them only as 'backward class of citizens'. Article 46 refers to them as educationally and economically weaker sections of the people'. These are several provisions laid down in different Articles in our Constitution for the advancement of Other Backward Classes or OBCs.

However, the issue of reservation is more complex, particularly at the all India level. The ground reality has shown many of the measures are not effective in improving the condition of the poor and deprived. The issue of criteria of reservation is, therefore, raised again, and again. There is the need for its assessment and policy formulation from time to time.

In the final analysis we observe that caste is losing the traditional functions, norms and structure because of the changes that have taken place in society but caste still exists. It is acquiring new 'avatar to suit the changed environment, condition and mind-sets.

The caste is modifying itself but is still persisting, particularly in the rural areas. In urban areas, caste is persisting in the form of complex networks of interest and class groups. However caste as a dynamic reality of Indian society has undergone many changes and yet there are elements of continuity. The caste system as an identity group exists as a unique social institution of Indian society.

Check Your Progress II

i)   Discuss briefly how caste system has changed in contemporary India. Use about 10 lines to answer the question.

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ii)   How does Indian Constitution helps protect the lower castes from discrimination? Use about 10 lines to answer this question.

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4.5   LET US SUM UP

We have explained briefly the characteristics of caste and its history. It is associated with hierarchy and existed in rural areas in the form of Jajmani system. In addition to hierarchy, caste system is characterised by segmental division of labour i.e. occupation, restrictions on commensality which is eating 'kachcha' or 'pucca' food together and social interaction, civil and religious disabilities, privileges of different sections, restrictions on marriage and the choice of occupations. The changes and the continuity within the caste system have been explained. The relationship of caste and politics has also been explained with special reference to the role of caste in the institution of Panchayati Raj. In the last part, measures to prohibit caste discrimination taken by the government during the framing of our Constitution are explained. In conclusion, the present status of the system of caste, changes and continuity within the system have been explained.

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IGNOU BDP material (2017 (Reprint) ESO-12, Block 5 Caste and Class & ESO-14, Society and Stratification; Block 5 Explaining Caste in Indian Society.

4.7   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   Caste divides Hindu Society into different segments based on their regional caste hierarchy of Jatis and subjatis within the all India dursian of Varma (or colour). This hierarchy is ascriptive in nature i.e. one is learn into that Varna or Caste and is based on ritual purity and pollution.

ii) The attributional approach to understand caste system is based on the understanding of caste is terms of various attributes; such as hierarchy, purity and pollution occupations, etc. This approach has been used by sociologists like G.S. Ghurye.

Check Your Progress II

i) Caste system is considered to be a closed system of stratification; unlike class. However, sociologists have found in their studies that social mobility in terms of movement of caste groups from lower to upper rank had always been there. But; after Independence the process of Sanskritisation, Westernisation and Modernisation along with the changes brought about by a universal political system of democracy encoded in our Constitution helped bring faster changes in society. This led to changes in caste system but yet some rigid elements, such as, identity and its links to politics still continue to shape society in India.

ii) Indian Constitution through its mandate of bringing about equality, liberty and fraternity for all citizens of India protects its citizens from being discriminated through certain Constitutional measures such as:

i) Abolition of underchaibility

ii) Constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human rights.

iii) Reservation of seats for SC, ST and OBCs as measures of productive discrimination to ameliorete their social and economic condition and bring about social justice and equality in society.

UNIT 5   CLASS*

5.0   OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

*   define the concept of social class in India;

*   discuss the impact of British rule on the class formation in India;

*   explain the consequent uneven growth of social classes; and

*   describe the rural and urban classes in India.

5.1   INTRODUCTION

You have studied the caste dimension of social structure in the previous units. You learnt how well rooted and significant caste is in our society. Here, we will introduce you to another dimension of Indian social structure, namely, its class component. We will discuss the classes in India in the British and post-British periods. We will also describe these classes in the context of rural and urban society in India.

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* Adopted from IGNOU, BDP, ESO-12, Unit 23 pp.55 by Archana Singh

5.2   SOCIAL CLASSES IN INDIA

Social class has been defined as a kind of social group, which is neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned. It is generally defined as a stratum of people occupying similar social positions. Wealth, income, education, occupation are some of the basic determinants of class. It is relatively open, i.e. any one who satisfies the basic criteria can become its member. There are several classes in a society. These classes are hierarchically ranked primarily in terms of wealth and income. The differences of wealth and income are expressed in different life styles and consumption patterns. Social classes are the characteristic features of industrial societies (Bottomore 1962: 188). To give you an example, in a capitalist society we generally find the class of capitalists and the **working classes** besides several others.

Social classes in India, as we see them today, had their genesis during the British rule. This is not to say that the class phenomenon was absent in the pre-British Indian society. The class dimension of Indian society was only less pronounced than it turned out to be during the British period. The so-called self-sufficiency of the village community appears to have been one of the reasons behind it. That is, village community generally produced only what was required for the consumption needs of the village. There was hence little surplus and therefore less marked differentiation among the village population.

Even when there was a marked class dimension; it was overshadowed by the caste component. In fact, the only sphere where class dimension showed itself rather more sharply was in the nature of interaction between the rulers and the ruled. The king and his courtiers represented a class quite different from the subjects over whom they ruled. The courtiers comprised the *Zamindars, Jagirdars* and several others. They along with the king lived on the revenue collected from the village community under their jurisdiction.

Besides these classes there were also classes of administrative officers of various ranks, of merchants, artisans and specialists of various kinds.

The colonial rule in India proved to be one of the turning points in Indian history. It introduced new elements, which led to some radical changes in Indian society. Now let us see what the impact of the British rule was on the class formation in India.

5.3   THE IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE ON CLASS FORMATION IN INDIA

The impact of British rule in India has brought about far-reaching changes in Indian society. Some of these changes are discussed in the following sections.

5.3.1   Change in Agriculture

The emergence of new social classes in India was the consequence of far-reaching changes brought about by the British in the economic structure of India. The British administration revolutionised the existing land system. It did away with the traditional rights of the village community over the village land. Instead it created individual ownership rights in land by introducing several land reforms

during the eighteenth century, such as the Permanent Settlement, the *Ryotwari* settlement, and the *Mahalwari* settlement. With this, land became private property, a commodity in the market. It could be mortgaged, purchased or sold.

Till the village ownership of land existed, the village was the unit of assessment. The new land revenue system eliminated the village as the unit. It introduced the system of individual land assessment and revenue payment. Along with it, a new method of fixing land revenue and its payment was introduced. Previously, revenue was fixed at a specified portion of the year's actual produce. This was replaced by a system of fixed money payment irrespective of crops. The landlord or cultivator under the system was hence forced to meet this demand. Further, the payment of revenue in cash gave impetus to production of cash crops in place of food crops. With expanding railway and transport system production for market became fairly well established. This commercialisation of agriculture, in turn, stimulated the growth of trade and commerce in India.

5.3.2 Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce were centred around two things. Supply of raw material for industries in Britain was one. Procuring of the British manufactured goods for consumption in India was another. The latter had a disastrous effect on town and village handicrafts. Village and town handicrafts could not stand the competition brought about by import of goods from Britain and got disintegrated. Meanwhile there was lack of sufficient industrial development. The result was that the emerging industry could not absorb the displaced population, which eventually fell on an already stagnant agriculture.

5.3.3 Development of Railways and Industry

Alongside the growth of trade and commerce, there was rapid development of the transport system in India. The railways expanded on an increasing scale from the middle of the nineteenth century. These developments were undertaken with a view to meet the raw material requirements of industries in Britain. The construction of railways and roads also gave scope for investment of British capital in India. It led to better mobility of troops and for establishment of law and order. Investment of British capital found an outlet initially in such spheres as plantations (indigo, tea), cotton, jute and mining industries. This was the beginning of the industrialisation process in India. By then, there was accumulation of sufficient savings on the part of Indian traders and merchants. This served as capital and made possible the creation of Indian owned industries.

5.3.4 State and Administrative System

Even before these developments, the British government had organised a huge and extensive state machinery to administer the conquered territory. A large number of educated individuals were required to staff this machinery. It was not possible to secure the staff of educated people from Britain for running such huge administrative machinery. Therefore the foreign rulers felt that there was a need for the introduction of Western education in India. Thus, schools, colleges and universities were established to impart Western education in India and to cater to the needs of the expanding economy and growing state machinery. As a consequence of the impact of British rule in India, the Indian society experienced an uneven growth of social classes. We are going to examine some aspects of this uneven growth in the next section.

> **Activity 1**
>
> Find out at least five people of your father, grand father or great-grand father's generation and request them to tell you about the changes that they had observed in the area where they lived due to the impact of British rule in India. Write a note of two pages and compare it, if possible, with the notes of other students at your Study Centre.

5.4 UNEVEN GROWTH OF SOCIAL CLASSES

The process of the rise of new social classes was an uneven one. It did not develop uniformly in different parts of the country and also among various communities. This was due to the fact that the social forces, which developed during the British rule, spread both in time and tempo unevenly. This was, in turn, dependent on the growth of political power in India. For example, it was in Bengal that two of the social classes – *zamindars* and **tenants** – came into existence first. Again it was in Bengal and Bombay that the first industrial enterprises started. This lead to the emergence of the class of industrialists and workers in this region. It was for this reason that the British established a complex administrative system and introduced modern education first in Bengal and Bombay.

The process of the rise of new social classes among different communities was also uneven. This was due to the fact that certain communities were already engaged in definite economic, social or educational vocations in pre-British period. For example Baniyas were traders by vocation in our traditional social structure. Hence they were the first to take up modern commerce, banking and industrial enterprises (Misra 1978: 14). Similarly, Brahmans were the first to take up modern education and enter the **professional classes**. These communities took up the new challenges and entered these spheres of activity first because they were already having the basic disposition towards these occupations. Thus on the eve of Independence we find that Indian social structure was made up of innumerable castes and classes. In some cases, these coincided with each other but in some they did not.

Check Your Progress I

i)   Define the concept of social classes. Use about seven lines.

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ii)   List some of the changes that have lead to the emergence of social classes in India. Use about three lines.

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iii)   Spell out two spehers which show uneven growth of social class. Use about two lines.

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5.5   SOCIAL CLASSES IN RURAL INDIA

In rural areas, classes consist principally of: i) **landlords**, ii) **tenants**, iii) **peasant proprietors**, iv) **agricultural labourers** and v) **artisans**. Now let us examine each of them one by one.

5.5.1   Landlords

The British administration made various types of land settlements such as, the Permanent settlement, *Ryotwari* settlement and *Mahalwari* settlement with the natives. Under the Permanent Settlement a new type of landlord was created out of the erstwhile tax collectors viz., the *zamindars*. Under the term of this settlement, the right of ownership was conferred on the *zamindars*. Before this settlement, the land used to be auctioned by the state on *patta* basis on which the *zamindars* only had the right to collect revenue. After this settlement, this land became theirs permanently i.e., they became hereditary owners of this land. *Zamindar's* only obligation was the payment of fixed land revenue to the British Government.

The new type of landholders were for all practical purposes equivalent to those of the landlords. As a result of this arrangement the peasants of this land were transformed into a mass of tenants in a day. This settlement was introduced by Lord Cornwalis in 1793, in the vast region of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and in certain districts of Madras. It was later also introduced in U.P. and parts of Bombay, Punjab, Sind, and so on. The *zamindari* settlement gave rise to a class of landlords, which was hitherto unknown in Indian society. The conferment of the right of ownership gave recognition to the right of mortgage and sale. 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 a new class of landlords who were primarily the merchants and money-lenders.

The right of ownership also recognised the right to lease. This led to large-scale growth of smaller tenures. Legislation made such tenures transferable. In the course of time, tenure passed into the hands of non-cultivators such as money-lenders, traders, and absentee landlords, who had very little interest in agriculture itself. Their main aim was only in extracting money from the land. The passing of land into the hands of non-cultivating classes was not the feature of *zamindari* areas alone. Similar development took place in the *ryotwari* areas too where the right of ownership was vested in the actual cultivators.

Types of Landlords

Broadly, there were two types of landlords: (i) the *zamindars/taluqdars* (old landlords) and (ii) money-lenders, merchants and others. Those who held such ownership of tenure rights (in *zamindari* areas) were often referred to as

intermediaries. These intermediaries were of various categories known by different names and found in various regions of U.P., Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. *Taluqdars* were inferior intermediaries whom the large *zamindars* created out of their own *zamindari* rights. *Jotedars* found in some parts of Bengal were substantial landholders who held land direct from the *zamindars*. They got land cultivated by subletting to the tenants on a 50: 50 share. Similarly, *Pattidars* held permanent leases at fixed dues under the *zamindars*. Ijardars on the other hand were those to whom the revenue of an area was hired out on a contract basis.

Land Reform and its Consequences

On the eve of Independence, the class of intermediaries owned a large portion of land in their hands while the peasant cultivators had little or no lands. There was also extreme economic inequality leading to socio-political inequality in Indian society. Hence, our national leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel placed a lot of emphasis on land reforms after India gained independence. The first phase of land reform was aimed at abolition of intermediaries such as, the *Zamindars*. The *Zamindari* system was abolished in the 1950s and land reform was first implemented in Uttar Pradesh. The objective was to bring cultivators into direct relationship with the state. Hence, conferment of proprietary or occupancy rights on actual cultivator-tenants was a part of this measure.

The abolition of *Zamindari* system in the 1950s had several consequences. It led to the formation of new classes. For instance, the intermediaries like the *zamindars* declared themselves as the owners of the land. Previously the *zamindar* used to lease out their lands to the tenants. But when *Zamindari* system was abolished, in states like U.P., the Government permitted the erstwhile *zamindars* to declare ownership of those lands which they were cultivating themselves. These lands were called *'Khudkasht'* lands. So, as consequence, the *Zamindars* forced most of the tenants out of these lands and declared the land, which they were holding as *'Khudkasht'*. Thus, after the land reforms they simply came to be renamed as *bhoomidars,* i.e., cultivators of the soil. The tenants who were actually cultivating the land prior to the land reforms were thrown out of their lands and most of them became landless **agricultural labourers**. It led to the pauperisation of the peasants. But there was a category of better off tenants who were able to buy the surplus land, created due to the land ceilings from the *Zamindars*, at reasonably low rates determined by the Government. Thus, a new class of peasant proprietors or cultivators was formed who took up agriculture as an enterprise (Khusro 1975: 186).

Thus, the land reform measures after Independence failed to create a socially homogeneous class of cultivators. All the same, the top strata of the agrarian hierarchy, the *Zamindars,* lost their right to extract taxes from the peasants. They were left with truncated landholding. Their economic, political and social supremacy was also broken. Hence, they could no longer enjoy the kind of control they used to exercise over peasants. Under the circumstance, they found it difficult to live as rentiers. Indeed only a small proportion of them continue to live as rentiers. The rest have taken to active participation in the management and improvement of their farm.

They have also brought about radical change in the methods of agricultural production. The erstwhile landlords and some of the ex-tenants thus became the forerunners of capitalist trend in the Indian agriculture. In view of such changes,

they also took maximum benefits out of the **Green Revolution** programme launched by the government. These changes had led to the development of a class of "gentlemen" or progressive farmers who had some education and often training in agriculture. These farmers had taken up agriculture as a kind of business. They invest money in agricultural crops, which have higher cash value i.e., they go in for cash crops. They read the reports of experts, use best seeds and fertilisers.

5.5.2 Peasant Proprietors

Another settlement made by the British is known by the name of Ryotwari Settlement. This was introduced in Madras, Bombay Presidencies in the nineteenth century. Under this settlement, ownership of land was vested in the peasants. The actual cultivators were subjected to the payment of revenue. However, this settlement was not a permanent settlement and was revised periodically after 20-30 years. It did not bring into existence a system of peasant ownership. Instead the cultivators came into direct contact with the State which replaced the oppressive role of the landlord. The settlement thus gave rise to a class of peasant proprietors. Owing to excessive land revenue, small landholdings, acute indebtedness, this class underwent impoverishment from the very beginning.

The process of differentiation was at work among the peasant proprietors. In the process, a few climbed up in the socio-economic hierarchy but a large number fell from their previous rank and position. A great majority of them were transformed into tenants and even agricultural labourers. This showed a large-scale passing of land from the actual cultivators to not only those of money-lenders, merchants and others, but also to a certain section of peasant proprietors who had become rich peasants.

In the post-Independence period, there was increase in the number of peasant proprietors as mentioned before in this unit. This was due to measures like *Zamindari* abolition and ceiling on existing landholdings and family labour. By paying compensation to *zamindars,* the erstwhile tenants obtained proprietary rights over the land, which they held as tenants. This option could be availed of by and large only by the rich tenants. Similarly, through ceiling on landholding, many could acquire proprietary rights in land.

The peasant proprietors, in the past as well as in the present, hardly constitute a homogeneous category. They may be broadly divided into three categories, namely, (i) the rich, (ii) the middle, and (iii) the poor peasants.

i) **Rich peasants:** They are proprietors with considerable holdings. They perform no fieldwork but supervise cultivation and take personal interest in land management and improvement. They are emerging into a strong capitalist farmer group.

ii) **Middle peasants:** They are landowners of medium size holdings. They are generally self-sufficient. They cultivate land with family labour.

iii) **Poor peasants:** They are landowners with holdings that are not sufficient to maintain a family. They are forced to rent in other's land or supplement income by working as labourers. They constitute a large segment of the agricultural population.

The peasant proprietors had been instrumental in bringing about great change in Indian agriculture, specially in Punjab, Haryana, western U.P., Karnataka and Bihar. This change is known as the Green Revolution. The role of such peasants was crucial in this change.

Green Revolution: After Independence, India was faced with acute food shortage. Green revolution was seen as a way out of the problem. Like all other programmes of planned rural development, India embarked upon the Green Revolution in the 1960s. It began launching programmes like the High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP), the Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) and the like. These measures were introduced initially in a few selected areas, which were mostly irrigated. Under the programme, there was considerable use of fertilizers and pesticides. There was also increase in the acreage under irrigation either through canals or installation of water pumps, etc. Correspondingly, there was marked increase in crop yield. The programme, initiated initially on an experimental basis, took off exceedingly well in Punjab, Haryana and western U.P. The improved method of cultivation thus became a general pattern of agricultural practices in these parts of the country. There was even further trend towards modern method of cultivation viz. mechanisation. The increasing use of tractors, tillers, threshers, reflected this trend.

Such development led to grave social consequences. Socio economic inequalities inherent in the agrarian structure were further reinforced. It led to further concentration of land into the hands of a few. Side by side, rural poverty had increased. The agricultural labourers, the landless and near landless, form the core of the rural poor.

The present big landowners in various parts of India are formed into organisations to safeguard their interests. Some of these organisations are for example, All India Kisan Sabha, Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU), Kshetkari Sanghatana and so on. Such organisations in some parts of India had begun in the British period. For example, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa Zamindars Association. Under the auspices of such organisations, peasants took part in the National Movement in India (Chandra 1971: 204). All categories of peasants are, in general, members of these organisations. They are, however, mostly dominated by rich peasants and leadership comes from them.

5.5.3 Tenants

The creation of *zamindari* settlement transformed the owner cultivators of pre-British India into a class of tenants. The *zamindars* resorted to the practice of extracting an exorbitant rent from the tenants. Those who failed to pay were evicted from land and were replaced by those ready to pay higher rents. Similar practice prevailed in estates, which were leased out by the *zamindars*. Broadly then there were two categories of tenants in *zamindari* areas – tenants under *zamindars* and tenants under lease (tenure) holders during the British period. Tenants under tenure holders were thus sub-tenants. Of course, various categories of tenants under subtenants too had grown up in Bengal. The lowest in the hierarchy were **sharecroppers**. This process of creating tenants and subtenants is called sub-infeudation.

The growth of tenants was not confined to *zamindari* areas alone. Even in *ryotwari* areas where peasant proprietorship was introduced, a new class of tenants grew.

They were composed broadly of the earlier owners whose land passed into the hands of money-lenders and others in the course of time. Legislations were passed from time to time in various parts to protect the interests of tenants. This did give some protection to the affluent category of tenants. The lower impoverished category of tenants remained unprotected.

On the eve of Independence, there were various categories of tenants. Broadly they could be classified as tenants, subtenants, sharecroppers, etc. In *zamindari* areas, of course, there were many sub-categories between the *zamindars* and the actual cultivators who were in general sharecroppers. Tenants on the whole enjoyed occupancy right. They could not be evicted. Sub-tenants in general enjoyed some security of tenure but were liable to eviction. Sharecroppers on the other hand did not have any security of tenure and were at the mercy of their landlords. They cultivated the land and retained only a half share of the produce.

Tenancy Reforms

Tenancy reforms became an important component of land reform programme. The provisions under the reforms were regulation of rent, security of tenure and ownership of tenant. However, there was not much success due to loopholes in the programme and its implementation. The benefits of the reform, of course, mainly went to the affluent section of the tenant class. They acquired ownership rights in areas not taken by the *zamindars* for their personal cultivation i.e., the land besides their *khudkasht* land. Subtenants too benefited to some extent as they could get the occupancy right and in some situations could even convert it into ownership right.

In short, the affluent section of tenants and subtenants were transformed into peasant proprietors with tenancy reform programme. Sharecroppers on the other hand, gained little from these programmes. With the second phase of land reform viz. ceiling on land holding, there was reduction in the extent of tenancy. Sharecropping however, continues even thereafter. Indeed, sharecroppers constitute the most important, if not the only, segment of tenant class in rural India today. Organisationally and politically, they are weak though they form a very important component of peasant organisation in India.

5.5.4 Agricultural Labourers

Non-cultivating landlords, peasant proprietors and tenants are not the only social groups connected with agriculture. Along with the swelling of rent paying tenants there was also a progressive rise in the number of agricultural labourers. The growing indebtedness among peasant population, followed by land alienation and displacement of village artisans was largely responsible for this.

The agricultural labourers were and still are broadly of three types. Some owned or held a small plot of land in addition to drawing their livelihood from sale of their labour. Others were landless and lived exclusively on hiring out of their labour. In return for their labour, the agricultural labourers were paid wages, which were very low. Their condition of living was far from satisfactory. Wages were generally paid in kind i.e. food grains like paddy, wheat and pulses. Sometimes cash was paid in lieu of wages in kind. A certain standard measure was employed to give these wages. In fact, payment in kind continued alongside money payments. There was another type of labour prevailing in many parts of

the country. Their status was almost that of bondage or semi bondage. Dublas and Halis in Gujarat, Padials in Tamil Nadu are a few examples of such bonded labour existing in India. Such labour force exists in some parts even today. The land reform programmes after Independence have done almost nothing to improve the condition of agricultural labourers in India. Of course, the government has proposed to settle them on co-operative basis on surplus or newly reclaimed or wasteland. Bonded labour was legally abolished in India in 1972 and Government, as well as, voluntary agencies are doing serious work in order to locate the bonded labourers and rehabilitate them. There has been considerable swelling in the number of agricultural labourers in the wake of the land reform programmes. Resumption of land by landlords for personal cultivation and eviction of tenants from their tenure have been the factors leading to this trend. The process was further accelerated by the Green Revolution. Large farms, being in conformity with the Green Revolution, has opened the way for greater concentration of land by purchase, sale or through eviction of tenants. In the process the rank of agricultural labourers has further increased. At the same time, there is very low rate of transfer of the agricultural labour population to industry. Hence, there is little likelihood of radical change in the social and economic situation of the agricultural labourers in most parts of the country. The government has, of course, taken some steps towards protecting their interest. Legislation towards abolition of bonded labour and minimum wage structure on the one hand, and employment generating programmes on the other, reflect this concern. Such measures are, however, far from effective. The agricultural labourers hence constitute the weakest section of the rural society.

5.5.5 Artisans

In rural areas the class of artisans form an integral part of the village community. They have existed since the ancient periods contributing to the general self-sufficient image of an Indian village. Some of these are like the carpenter (*Badhai*), the ironsmith (*Lohar*), the potter (*Kumhar*) and so on. Not all villages had families of these artisans but under the *Jajmani* system, sometimes a family of these occupational castes served more than one village.

Some social mobility did exist in the pre-British period but, generally, these artisan castes did not experience much change. Due to the advent of the British in India, this relatively static existence of the artisan castes suffered a radical change. Indian economy became subordinate to the interests of the British trade and industry.

Rural artisans and craftsmen were hard hit under the British rule. They could not compete with the mass manufactured goods produced by the British industries. These goods were machine-made and cheap. For example, textile used to be an area where Indian artisans excelled themselves. Even today we hear the praises of *"Dhaka malmal"* (a fine variety of cloth produced in Dhaka, now in Bangladesh). Due to the British impact and availability of mass manufactured cloth, the Indian textiles suffered a severe set-back. Therefore, the demand for the goods produced by the Indian artisans dropped. The artisans suffered badly and most of them became so pauperised that they had to revert back to agriculture. This in turn flooded the agricultural fields with surplus labour which became counter productive instead of useful.

The destruction of the village arts and crafts led to deindustrialisation of rural economy. After Independence, the Indian Government has taken several steps to improve the condition of the artisans. New cottage industries have been established, loan facilities provided and their skills have been recognised in the form of National Awards etc. Transport facilities to bring their products to the urban markets have also been provided. However, the class of artisans and craftsmen in the rural areas is not a homogeneous lot. In their own group there are some who are highly skilled and some semi-skilled or less skilled. Thus, socially all of them cannot be ranked in one class. But in a broad sense we can consider them as a class by virtue of their occupation. Yet, they remain very muchunorganised except to some extent in parts of south India. Their chance of developing an effective organisation for collective bargain too appears quite remote. The distinct social classes commonly seen in rural and urban India are picturised in figure numbers 5.1 and 5.2, respectively.
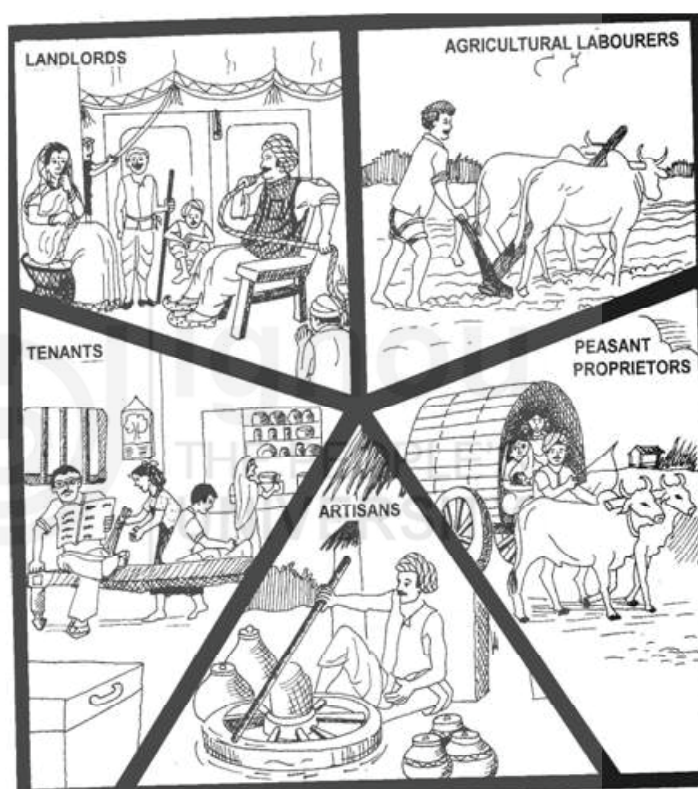
Figure 5.1: Social Classes in rural India

Check Your Progress II

i)   Describe the ryotwari settlement of land during the British rule. Use two lines for your answer.

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ii) Describe the permanent settlement of land during the British rule. Use three lines for your answer.

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iii) Distinguish between the rich peasant proprietors and the middle peasant proprietors, in about six lines.

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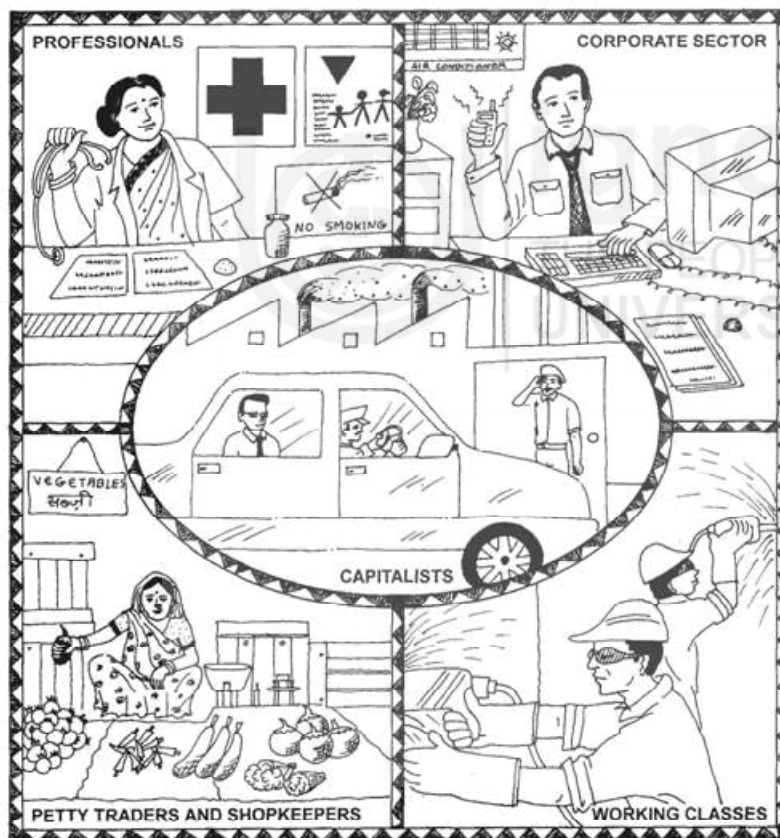

Figure 5.2 : Social Classes in urban India

5.6 SOCIAL CLASSES IN URBAN INDIA

In the urban areas social classes comprise principally (i) **capitalists** (commercial and industrial), (ii) **corporate sector;** (iii) **professional classes**, (iv) **petty traders and shopkeepers** and (v) **working classes** (see figure 5.2). Now let us examine each of them one by one.

5.6.1 Commercial and Industrial Classes

Under the British rule, production in India became production for market. As a result of this, internal market expanded and the class of traders engaged in internal trading grew. Simultaneously, India was also linked up with the world market. This led to the growth of a class of merchants engaged in export-import business. Thus, there came into being a commercial middle class in the country. With the establishment of railways, the accumulation of savings on the part of this rich commercial middle class took the form of capital to be invested in other large-scale manufactured goods and modern industries. Like the British, who pioneered the industrial establishment in India, the Indians, too made investment initially in plantations, cotton, jute, mining and so on. Indian society thus included in its composition such new groups as mill owners, mine owners, etc. Subsequently, they also diversified the sphere of their industrial activity. Economically and socially this class turned out to be the strongest class in India.

However, Indians lagged far behind in comparison to the British in these activities. Government policy was mainly responsible for their slow development during the colonial period. The conflict of interest with the British led to the formation of independent organisations by the Indian **commercial and industrial classes**. This class participated in the freedom struggle by rallying behind the professional classes who were the backbone of the Indian National Movement. With the attainment of Independence, emphasis was laid on rapid industrialisation of the country. In this process, the state was to play a very active role. It evolved economic and industrial policies, which clearly indicated the role of the commercial and industrial class as the catalyst of industrialisation in India. It also actively assisted such classes towards augmentation of production. The state hence introduced the mixed economy pattern, which implies that there is a public sector and a private sector in the Indian Economy. The major fields like agriculture, industry and trade were left to the private individuals. The creation of infrastructure and establishment of heavy and strategic industries was taken up by the state sector. This type of economy led to a phenomenal rise in the number of industries owned and controlled by the capitalists. It also led to the rise of commercial classes. The commercial and business class has therefore, grown in scale and size in the post-Independence era. These industries were not confined to traditional sectors alone such as textile, jute, mines, and plantation. Rather there was considerable diversification into steel industries, paper mills, and various steel manufactured goods. Industrialisation, as has been going on, however shows a disturbing trend. There is a growing tendency towards inequality amongst industrial classes. There is heavy concentration of assets, resources and income in a few business houses such as the Tatas, Birlas, Dalmias, and a few others.

5.6.2 The Corporate Sector

Any organisation that is under government ownership and control is called as public sector units and any organisation, which does not belong to public sector can be taken to be a part of private sector. The firms and organisation which are owned, controlled and managed exclusively by private individuals and entities are included in private sector. All private sector firms can be classified into two categories, such as individually owned and collectively owned. Collectively owned firms are further classified into: i) partnership firms; ii) joint Hindu family iii) joint-stock companies and iv) co-operatives. The most important of these is the joint-stock organisation, which is otherwise popularly known as corporate

sector. Joint-stock companies which do no belong to public sector are collectively known as private corporate sector. Indian corporate sector is substantially large and highly diversified. The role and significance of private corporate sector can be gauged from the contribution it makes in terms of value added to national economy. The contribution of private corporate sector in terms of net value added, increased from 10 per cent of the total 'net value added' generated in the economy in early 1980s to around 19 per sent of the same in mid 1990s (Shanta 1999). This clearly shows the significance of private corporate sector in the economy is increasing constantly. The private corporate sector has been important in many other important respects also. According to a study carried out by 'Dalal Street Investment Journal (2000), most companies, which achieved best growth in 1999-2000 in terms of their net profit, belong to private corporate sector. Greater move towards privatisation after the adoption of new economic policy in 1991 accorded significant importance to private sector in the development process of the economy. Due to the radical change in policy approach from regularisation to liberalisation, private corporate sector has gained centre stage in the economic areas.

5.6.3 Professional Classes

The new economic and state systems brought about by the British rule required cadres of educated Indians trained in modern law, technology, medicine, economics, administrative science and other subjects. In fact, it was mainly because of the pressing need of the new commercial and industrial enterprises and the administrative systems that the British government was forced to introduce modern education in India. They established modern educational institutions on an increasing scale. Schools and colleges giving legal, commercial and general education were started to meet the needs of the state and the economy. Thus, there came into being an expanding professional class. Such social categories were linked up with modern industry, agriculture, commerce, finance, administration, press and other fields of social life. The professional classes comprise modern lawyers, doctors, teachers, managers and others working in the modern commercial and other enterprises, officials functioning in state administrative machinery, engineers, technologists; agriculture scientists, journalists and so on. The role of this class in the National Movement was decisive. They were, in fact, pioneers, and pace-setters. They were also the force behind progressive social and religious reform movements in the country.

Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in post-independent India has opened the way for large-scale employment opportunities in industries, trade and commerce, construction, transport, services and other varied economic activities. Simultaneously, the state has created a massive institutional set-up comprising a complex bureaucratic structure throughout the length and breadth of the country. This has provided employment on a sizeable scale. The employment in these sectors, whether private or government requires prerequisite qualifications, such as education, training, skill, and so on. Bureaucrats, management executives, technocrats, doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, are some of the categories who possess such skills.

They have grown considerably in size and scale ever since independence. This class, however, hardly constitutes a homogeneous category. Of course, it enjoys pay and condition of work far more favourable than those engaged in manual

work but less than those enjoyed by the upper class. However, even within this non-proprietary class of non-manual workers, a deep hierarchy exists. There are some high paid cadres at the top. A large proportion on the other hand, has earnings of only a little above those of the non-manual workers. There are also considerable differences in the condition of their work and opportunity for promotion. They differ in their styles of life as well. In view of these observations we can say that they are only gradually crystallising into a well-defined middle class.

5.6.4 Petty Traders, Shopkeepers and Unorganised Workers

In addition to the new classes discussed above, there has also been in existence in urban areas a class of petty traders and shopkeepers. These classes have developed with the growth of modem cities and towns. They constitute the link between the producers of goods and commodities and the mass of consumers. That is, they buy goods from the producers or wholesalers and sell it among the consumers. Thus, they make their living on the profit margin of the prices on which they buy and sell their goods and commodities.

Like all other classes, this class also has grown in scale in post-independent India. The unprecedented growth of cities in the process of urbanisation, which the post-independent India has been witness to, has stimulated the growth of this class. The pressure of population on land and lack of avenues of employment in rural society has led to a large-scale migration of rural population to towns and cities in search of employment. Such migration is taking place not only in big cities but also in hundreds of medium sized or small sized cities that are springing up in different parts of the country. Urbanisation on the other hand, offers a variety of new activities and employment. The growing urban population creates demands for various kinds of needs and services. Petty shop-keeping and trading caters to these needs of the urban population. A section of the urban population draws its livelihood from these sources. In view of the growing urbanisation their size has considerably increased. Besides these spheres of activities, urbanisation also offers opportunities for employment in the organised and unorganised sector of the economy. The opportunities in the organised sector are small and require educational qualification, and training. The bulk of rural migrants lack this pre-requisite and hence the organised sector is closed to them. Invariably then, they fall back upon the unorganised sector of the economy. They work in small-scale production units or crafts, industry or manual service occupation. They get low wages, and also are deprived of the benefits, the organised labour force are entitled to.

In the wake of economic liberalisation since 1991, there is now a trend towards deregulation of labour market, which may make the labour relations in the unorganised sector more exploitative. Although economic liberalisation is affecting the organised workers directly, there may be considerable impact on unorganised workers. For instance, the growing unemployment in the organised sector tends to decrease the wages and the working days of the workers in the unorganised sector. Besides many petty trade and business activities engaging unorganised workers will be affected because of the entry of the private corporate sector and multinational corporations. A recent study (Haque and Naidu 1999) shows that the impact of economic liberalisation has been disastrous for those employed in petty trade, artisans, fisherman, etc. thus illiteracy coupled with lack of organisational strength is likely to worsen the working environment and labour relations in the unorganised sector.

This class also constitutes an amorphous category. It comprises on the one hand self-employed petty shopkeepers traders, vendors, hawkers, and on the other, semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the informal sector. They are the least organised of the urban groups in India.

Activity 2

In your neighbourhood select ten people of different occupational backgrounds and chart out the classes to which they belong, such as, landlord, tenants, artisans, agricultural labourers, capitalist, professional class, petty traders and shopkeepers or working class.

1) What are your reasons to put these people in these classes? Give at least two reasons for each.

2) Write a note of about two pages and compare it, if possible, with other students of your Study Centre.

5.6.5 Working Classes

Origin of the working class could be traced back to the British rule. This was the modern working class which was the direct result of modern industries, railways, and plantations established in India during the British period. This class grew in proportion as plantations, factories, mining, industry, transport, railways and other industrial sectors developed and expanded in India. The Indian working class was formed predominantly out of the pauperised peasants and ruined artisans. Level of living and working conditions characterised their existence. A large proportion of them generally remained indebted because of their inability to maintain themselves and their families. The government passed legislation, from time to time, such as the Indian Posts Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Factories Act, the Miners Act, etc. These were however, considered by social thinkers as inadequate to protect the rights of the labourers.

These hard conditions of life and labour led to the emergence of trade unions and the growth of working class movement in India. This was evident from the participation of the workers in, strikes and other activities launched by trade unions from time to time. As a result, there was considerable improvement in the wage structure and working conditions of the working class populations in India.

India has undergone rapid industrialisation after Independence. This industrialisation is no longer confined to a few urban centres as was the case in colonial period. Further, it is also no longer confined to a few traditional sectors such as textile, jute, mining and plantation. It has diversified into new spheres. The state itself has played a pivotal role in the expansion of heavy and strategic industries.

In view of this working class has grown in volume in post-independent India. They have also been dispersed to different parts and different sectors of the industry. Thus, the working class has become much more heterogeneous. It consists of workers employed in different types of industries that have different social and historical background. This diversity in the working class has given rise to a complex set of relations among the different sectors.

The attitude of the government towards the working class too underwent change in the post-independence period. The government's attitude towards working class had become more favourable. It had imposed some regulation on the employers and had granted some protection to the workers. Several Acts were passed granting some facilities to the workers. Some of these are Payment of Bonus Act, Provident Fund and Gratuity Act etc. All these affected the working class people in the country.

It is a changed scenario ever since India adopted New Economic Policy and Structural Adjustment programme in 1991. The New Economic Policy, which operates under an open and liberalised economic regime, has emphasised a deregulated regime with less emphasis on regulation of labour and employment conditions. This trend largely went against the interests of the working class. The major adjustment policy followed by the private as well as public sector has resulted in an increase in the casualisation of labour on a large scale. It also resulted in the redundancy of existing workforce and relocation of units to lower wage areas with temporary workforce. Apart from that companies had resorted to direct reduction of workforce. The industrial units resorted to no new recruitment or replacement, retrenchment, voluntary retirement schemes, increased sub contracting, automation and shut down of departments and closure. This is accompanied by the shift in the government policies away from protection of employment by withdrawing certain pro-labour legal provisions. The result is that the workers are made to work under exploitative conditions without much bargaining power.

The trade union organisation too shows some change in the post-Independence period. Till Independence, political and economic struggles of the trade unions had been directed against imperialist subjugation. After Independence their struggle has been against the employers of labour and it is more specific in its goal. Yet, considerable division exists among the trade unions in terms of control, sector and region of the industries. Much of the resistance in the form of strikes has been generally organised industry wise or region wise. Trade unions have also taken refuse and found support in different political parties. As a result, trade union movement in post-Independence period has been subjected to further divisions and subdivisions.

The process of current industrial restructuring has a negative impact on trade unions. The new management strategies created an atmosphere of job insecurity among the workers and severely curtailed trade union activity. Due to the consequences of liberalisation of the Indian economy as well as closure of sick units and changing pattern of work and organisation, the trade union's influence has come down to lowest possible level, resulting in loss of membership. These developments have posed a serious challenge to trade unions reflecting a deep crisis in their existing structure. In the emerging scene the trade unions also adopted different strategies. Providing a joint trade union platform, formation of unity among public sector Unions, merging of central trade unions, addressing the needs of the unorganised sector are some worth mentioning here. In the present circumstances the trade unions have to adopt new strategies and have to leave behind their confrontationist approach, which depend heavily on agitations and protest which became irrelevant (Radhakrishna, 1998).

Check Your Progress III

i)   Identify two important factors, which paved the way for industrialisation in India. Use about three lines.

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ii)   List four major fields in which early industrialisation took place. Use about three lines.

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iii)   Spell out two factors, which facilitated the growth of professional classes in India.

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iv)   What accounts for the growth of petty traders and shopkeepers in India? Use about three lines.

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5.7   LET US SUM UP

Social classes constitute an important segment of social structure in modern India. Social classes have always been present through all ages but the social classes as we see them today in India, had their origins in the British rule.

Therefore, first of all, we outlined the impact of British rule on the class formation in India. In this connection, we pointed out the creation of new economy in British India. This reflected in the agricultural sector, in the form of introduction of private property in land, new revenue system and the increasing commercialisation of agriculture, which was a consequence of Agrarian Reforms introduced after Independence. The other spheres of this new economy were the growth of trade and commerce, extension of railways, introduction and expansion of industrial enterprises. The development of state and administrative system coupled with modern education were the other important social forces, which shaped the new classes in India. In the process we also pointed to the consequent uneven growth of social classes in different parts and communities of India. We then studied the rural classes in India. We classified them broadly into five divisions, such as, landlords, peasant proprietors, tenants, agricultural labourers and artisans. Each was studied with reference to its emergence and character. Major changes in their composition after Independence were pointed out. Similarly, urban classes were divided into five categories. These comprised commercial and industrial classes, the corporate sector, professional classes, petty traders, shopkeepers and unorganised workers, and working class. They too were studied with reference to their emergence, character and changing situation, in the post-Independence period.

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5.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   Social class is a kind of social group, which is neither legally defined nor religiously sanctioned. It has been defined as a stratum of people who share a similar position in society. They are relatively open and anyone who

satisfies the basic criteria of wealth and associated style of life, etc. can become its member. Social classes in a society are ranked hierarchically on the basis of primarily wealth and income. Classes are the characteristic features of industrial societies.

ii) Some of the changes that have led to the emergence of social classes in India are: (a) changing land system, (b) trade and commerce, (c) industrialisation, (d) state and administrative system, and (e) modern education.

iii) The uneven growth of social classes took place in two spheres. One was the various parts of India and the other, in the various communities in India.

Check Your Progress II

i) Ryotwari settlement was a settlement made by the British. Under this settlement the ownership of land was vested in the peasants who were the actual cultivators.

ii) Permanent settlement was a settlement made by the British. Under this settlement the right of ownership was conferred on the Zamindars. Their only obligation was to pay a fixed land revenue to the British Government.

iii) The rich peasants are proprietors having considerable landholdings. They are rich enough to hire agricultural labourers to do field work and they generally supervised cultivation. They take personal interest in the management and improvement of their land. In comparison to them, the middle peasants own medium size landholdings. They are self-sufficient and they use only family labour for land cultivation.

Check Your Progress III

i) The two important factors, which paved the way for industrialisation, are introduction of railways and the accumulation of savings.

ii) The four major fields in which the early industrialisation took place are: (a) plantation, (b) cotton, (c) jute, (d) mining.

iii) The factors, which facilitated the growth of professional classes in India, are: (a) trade, commerce and industry, (b) state and administrative system.

iv) Growth of towns and cities, on a large-scale accounts for the growth of petty traders and shopkeepers in India.

Further Readings

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Block 3
Social Institutions and Change

BLOCK 3   INTRODUCTION

The third, block **Social Institutions and Change** tries to focus on the topic of family, marriage and kinship in India. We have provided different approaches and theories to explain these concepts with suitable examples Religion being one of the most sensitive but very significant institution of society has been sociologically analysed and explained to you so that society in India, being a plural society, can be understood.

UNIT 6   FAMILY, MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP*

Structure

6.0   OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- define the concept of family, marriage and kinship;

- list the main characteristics of family, marriage and kinship;

- discuss the functions of family;

- explain the significance of marriage;

- describe the rules of marriage and degree of kinship; and

- discuss the types of family and marriage found in India.

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous Block 2: Social Structures and Practices, you learnt about the aspects of Indian Society, such as, tribes, caste, and class in India. Here in this

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Block 3: Social Institutions and Change we are going to further explain to you some more aspects of, Indian society such as, family, marriage and kinship and religion.

The present unit focuses on the major social institutions of all societies like, family, marriage and kinship. A student of sociology knows that these three institutions are at the core of all communities; learning about the main characteristics of these institutions; their definitions and social significance becomes a must to understand any society, especially society in India.

6.2 THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY

The word 'family' has been taken from the Roman word, 'famulus', which means a servant and the Latin word 'familia' meaning 'household'. In Roman law, the word denotes the group of producers and slaves and other servants as well as members connected by common descent. The family is one of the most primary groups in society. The family is a universal and the oldest among the other social institutions. The family is an institution in this sense that it gives the framework of relationship which is guided by certain rules and procedures which are at the root of the family. The meaning of family we can understand better by understanding the following definitions:

i)   Family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children.

ii)   It is a group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity (i.e. those kins who are related by blood, such as, mother and child) and affirms (those kins who are related by marriage e.g. sister's husband) who are therefore kin to one another.

iii) Family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children.

iv)   It is a social group characterised by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.

v)   Family is a biological social unit composed of husband, wife and children.

vi)   Family is the basic primary group and the natural matrix of personality.

vii) Family is a system of relationships existing between parents and children.

Broadly speaking, it refers to the group comprising parents and children. It may also refer, in some places, to a patri-or matrilineage or to groups of cognates, that is, persons descended from the same ancestor. In some other cases, it may refer to a group of relatives and their dependants forming one household. All this refers to the compositional aspect of this institution. Another aspect is that of the residence of its members. They usually share a common residence, at least for some part of their lives. Thirdly, we can also speak of the relational aspect of the family. Members have reciprocal rights and duties towards each other. Finally, the family is also an agent of socialisation. All these aspects make this institution different from other units of social structure.

Family is one of the most important social institutions. Most of the world's population lives in family units. The specific form and behavior patterns found within a family have shown variations through time across countries of the world and even within a country. Sociology looks at the institution both in terms of an

ideal type and a reality. He/she ascertains the ideals of the family system partly a set of norms which are passed from one generation to another. A sociologist also studies the actual way in which a family is patterned and re-patterned within a society, in a particular group through time. She will also try to identify the forces, which have been responsible for changing certain aspects of the family units in a particular manner. (IGNOU: 2017 ESO-12, Family, Marriage and Kinship, pp. 6)

6.2.1 Salient Features of Family

The salient features or characteristics of the family in society are as follows:

i)   *Universality* : Family is a universal social unit and existed in every age and in every society. Every person is a member of one family or the other.

ii) *Financial Provision* : Every family makes some kind of financial provision so that all the basic requirements of the family can be met of the members of family.

iii) *Limited Size and Nucleus* : Family is considered to be smallest kinship group and basically made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. It is limited in size and its membership is confined to those who are related by either marriage (these are also referred to as affianes or by blood ties (called consanguine). There are joint families or extended families, as well, which have at least three generations of parents and their children along with their own elderly parents and sons and their spouses living together.

iv) *Emotional Basis* : The members of family are emotionally bound to each other and share pleasures and pains with one another. The integration of bonds in a family is mutual affection and blood ties and they provide love, care and protection to each other.

v)   *Social Regulations* : In a family, the members are trained through socialization to follow social norms, customs and social conduct in the process of socialisation. Among the family members interrelationship and interactions are guided by social and legal regulations.

Nuclear Family   **Joint Family**

vi) The nuclear family of husband wife and their unmarried children grow into a joint family when the children grow up and get married and have their own children. The family then becomes joint till the children leave or parents die.

vii) *A Fixed or common Habitation* : Every family has a fixed place of habitation and members usually share a common residence in which husband, wife, their children and other relatives live together.

6.2.2 Functions of Family

Sociologists have tried to divide functions of family differently. Ogburn and Nimkoff divided function of family into six categories. These six categories are:

1) Affectional function, 2) Economic function, 3) Recreational function, 4) Protective function, 5) Religious function, and 6) Educational function.

These functions are

1) *Satisfaction of sex needs or Biological Functions* : The first and foremost biological functions of family is the satisfaction of sexual desire in a greater degree between husband and wife in an orderly and socially approved manner.

2) *Production and rearing of children* : The next important biological function of family is procreation. Family is an institution par excellence for rearing of children and gets a new generation which inherits the family legacy.

3) *Provision of home and minimum basic facilities or Economic Function* : Family fulfils some basic facilities and needs of its members to a certain extent by providing them food, clothing and shelter.

4) *Giving love and sympathy or Psychological Function* : All members of family are supposed to provide each other emotional support, sympathetic and caring attitude, stability and security to its members. For example, children require love and affection from their parents, husband and wife want love from each other, love and affection to the elderly from the family members and so on.

5) *Socialization* : The most important function of family is socialisation. Through the family, a child is able to learn language, customs, traditions, etiquette, norms and value, beliefs and social roles of the society. It is the family that socialises the new generation and transmits the moral ideas of group to its members.

6) *Protection of young* : The essential function of family is to protect and give physical care to every member formally right from the new-born baby to the elderly without their facing any risk and danger.

6.3 TYPES OF FAMILY

Normally the basic unit of social structure contains the two primary links of kinship. These are of parenthood and siblingship (see Figure 10.0). In simple terms, a family usually comprises various combinations and permutations of

these relationships. In the Indian context, we generally speak of the contrast between nuclear and joint family types.

A classification of families into joint and nuclear types is usually based on the way in which families are organised. For instance, the most popular definition of a nuclear family is to refer to it as a group consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried, children. The joint family is commonly defined as the nuclear family plus all kin belonging to the side of husband, and/or wife living in one homestead.

Frequently, the term 'extended' family is used instead of the term joint family to indicate that the combination of two or more nuclear families is based on an extension of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the patrilineally extended family is based on an extension of the father-son relationship, while the matrilineally extended family is based on the mother-daughter relationship. The extended family may also be extended horizontally to include a group consisting of two or more brothers their wives and children. This horizontally extended family is called as the fraternal or collateral family.

In India, the family whether extended vertically and/or horizontally is called the joint family, which is strictly speaking also a property-sharing unit. Thus, the concept of joint family in India has legal and other references as well. This will be discussed further in the following sections.

6.3.1 Nuclear and Joint Family

The above definitions of the nuclear and the joint family are limited in the sense that they do not say anything more than the compositional aspect of the family. When we look at the wide variations through time in patterns of family living based on region, religion, caste and class in India we find that the nuclear and the joint family organisation cannot be viewed as two distinct, isolated and independent units but as a continuum, as something interrelated in a developmental cycle.

6.3.2 The Continuum of Nuclear and Joint Family Systems

We say that the nuclear and the joint family systems have to be viewed as a continuum. This means that these two types of family systems have to be looked at as something interrelated in a developmental cycle. The structure of a family changes over a time period in terms of size, composition, role and status of persons, the family and societal norms and sanctions. There probably is rarely a family in India, which remains perpetually nuclear in composition. Often additional members like an aged parent or unmarried brothers and sisters may come to live with a man, his wife and unmarried children. The nuclear family then, is a stage in a cycle with other structural types of families. Even when certain forces have enjoined the establishment of nuclear household, for a relatively long period of time, the ritual, economic and sentimental link with relatives who compose a joint family are often maintained. We shall discuss about these forces and impact of these forces in the next section.

While discussing the nature of nuclear family in India, Pauline Kolenda (1987) has discussed additions/modifications in nuclear family structure. She gives the following compositional categories.

i)   **Nuclear family** refers to a couple with or without children.

ii)   **Supplemented nuclear family** indicates a nuclear family plus one or more unmarried, separated, or widowed relatives of the parents, other than their unmarried children.

iii) **Subnuclear family** is identified as a fragment of a former nuclear family for instance a widow/widower with her/his unmarried children or siblings (unmarried or widowed or separated or divorced) living together.

iv)   **Single person household**

v)   **Supplemented subnuclear family** refers to a group of relatives, members of a formerly complete nuclear family along with some other unmarried, divorced or widowed relative who was not a member of the nuclear family. For instance, a widow and her unmarried children may be living together with her widowed mother-in-law. In the Indian context, it is easy to find all these types of family. However, in terms of societal norms and values, these types relate to the joint family system.

Much has been written about the joint family system, especially the Hindu joint family system. The **patrilineal, patrivirilocal** (residence of the couple after marriage in the husband's father's home), property owning, co-residential and commensal joint family, comprising three or more generations has been depicted as the ideal family unit of Hindu society. M.S. Gore (1968: 4-5) points out that ideally, the joint family consists of a man and his wife and their adult sons, their wives and children, and younger children of the paternal couple. In this ideal type the oldest male is the head of the family. The rights and duties in this type of family are laid down to a great extent by the hierarchical order of power and authority. Age and sex are the main ordering principles of family hierarchy. The frequency and the nature of contact/communication between members vary on the basis of sex. A married woman, for instance works in the kitchen with her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. Younger members are required to show respect to the older members and can hardly question the authority or decision taken by elders even when it directly concerns them. Children of the joint family are children of all the male members in the parental generation.

Emphasis on conjugal ties (i.e. between husband and wife) is supposed to weaken the stability of the joint family. The father-son relationship (filial relationship) and the relationship between brothers (fraternal relationship) are more crucial
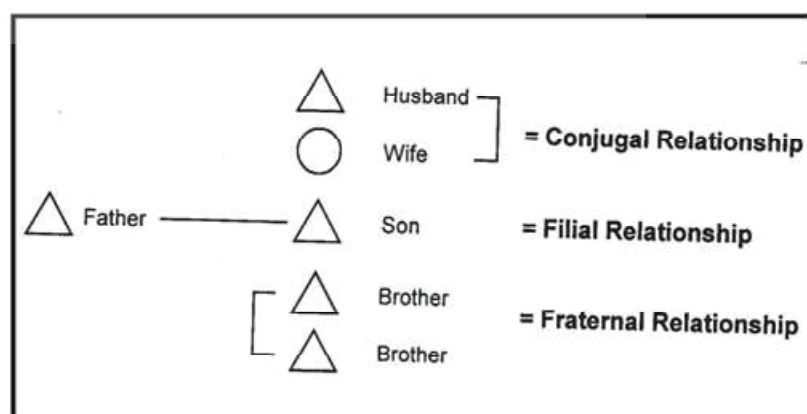

Fig. 10.0: Family relationships

for the joint family system than the husband-wife or conjugal relationship. The conjugal, filial and fraternal relationships can be expressed in simple kinship diagrams in figure 10.0: family relationships.

In a nuclear family the husband and wife relationship is important for the survival of the system. Hence, in M.S. Gore's view, it would be inappropriate to look at the joint family system as a collection of nuclear families. Having said that joint families are not merely a collection of nuclear families we must examine what constitutes jointness. For this purpose, in a separate section we will discuss the nature of joint family in India. This will also make it clear how and why Indian society has a continuum of nuclear and joint family systems and not two distinct forms of nuclear and joint family.

Check Your Progress I

i)   State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.

   a)   Joint family in India constitutes a mere collection of nuclear families.

   b)   The nuclear and the joint family can be looked at as a continuum in terms of a developmental cycle.

ii)   List the four major additions/modifications in the nuclear family structure, as suggested by Kolenda.

   a) ....

   b) ....

   c) ....

   d) ....

Nature of Joint Family in India

There are two aspects of joint family system in India based on

i)   What constitutes jointness?

ii)   Who constitutes a joint family?

Both the sub-sections will show us how the seemingly nuclear families in India are actually parts of larger family groups, which share the idea of 'jointness'.

What Constitutes Jointness?

Let us look at what is jointly shared by the members of a joint family. Their jointness is reflected in the factors of **commensality,** common residence, joint ownership of property, cooperation and sentiment of jointness, ritual bonds like worship of common deity. We shall discuss them one by one.

i)   **Commensality:** Most of the studies of joint family use commensality (eating together) as a defining criterion. The joint family is the hearth group; members cook and eat food from the same kitchen.

ii)   **Common Residence:** In some studies the joint family as the residential family group is stressed. Though it is possible to find a joint family having

the same hearth but not sharing the same dwelling or vice versa, by and large commensality and common residence are taken as essential ingredients of jointness (refer to Cohn 1961, Dube 1955, Mukherjee 1969, Kolenda 1968).

iii) **Joint Ownership of Property:** Some scholars have regarded joint ownership of property or **coparcenary** as the essence of jointness, irrespective of the type of residence and commensality. In legal terms, this is the most crucial factor used for defining a joint family.

iv) **Cooperation and Sentiment:** Scholars like I.P. Desai (1964) and K. M. Kapadia (1958) point out that jointness should be looked in functional terms. A functionally joint family lays stress on fulfilment of obligations towards kin.

A patrilineal joint family may consist of a number of households headed by males related through the father. They may be located even at distant places and may not even have property in common. But what is common is that they identify themselves as members of a particular 'family', cooperate in rituals and ceremonies, render financial and other kinds of help; and they cherish a common family sentiment and abide by the norms of joint living.

v) **Ritual Bonds:** The ritual bonds of a joint family are considered to be an important component of jointness. A joint family, thus, is bound together by periodic propitiation of the dead ancestors. The members perform a *'shraddha'* ceremony in which the senior male member of the joint family propitiates his dead father's or mother's spirit, offering it the *'pinda'* (balls of cooked rice) on behalf of all the members.

Another ritual bond among joint family members can be a common deity worship. In many parts of South India, each joint family has a tradition of worshipping a particular clan or village deity. Vows are made to these deities in times of joy and trouble. The first tonsure, donning of the sacred thread, marriages etc. are celebrated in or near the deity's temple. Srinivasa of Tirupathi and Subramanya of Palani are two well-known Hindu deities who have a large number of South Indian families attached to them (Srinivas 1969:71).

Still another important bond is pollution. Birth and death results in pollution and the group observing pollution consists of the members of the joint family, patrilineal or **matrilineal**. The bonds created by ancestor worship, family deities and observation of pollution persist even after the joint family has split into separate or smaller residential and commensal units (Srinivas 1969: 71).

From the above discussion of joint family it becomes clear that common kitchen or hearth, common residence, joint rights to property and the fulfillment of obligation towards kin and ritual bonds have been outlined as the main criteria for defining what constitutes jointness. Many scholars have pointed out that of these dimensions, co-residence and commensality, are the immediately identifiable characteristics of a joint family. Such a consideration, they feel, would also accommodate family patterns found in non-Hindu communities like the Muslims, Christians, etc. It would also accommodate families, which hardly have anything by way of ancestral or immovable property (Dube,1974).

Who Constitute a Joint Family?

We can look at this issue in terms of

i) kin relationship between the members

ii) the number of generations in one unit

iii) the sharing of common property.

i) Kin Relationship between the Members

We can say that a joint family may consist of members related lineally or collaterally or both. There is more or less an unanimous agreement that a family is essentially defined as "joint" only if it includes two or more related married couples. Also it has been observed that these couples may be related (i) lineally (usually in a father-son relationship or occasionally in a father-daughter relationship), or, (ii) collaterally (usually in a brother-brother relationship/or/ occasionally in a brother-sister relationship). Both these types refer to the compositional aspect of the patrilineal joint family. In matrilineal systems, found in South-west and North-east India, the family is usually composed of a woman, her mother and her married and unmarried daughters. The mother's brother is also an important member of the family; he is the manager of the matrilineal joint family affairs. The husbands of the female members live with them. In Kerala, a husband used to be a frequent visitor to the wife's household and he lived in his mother's household.

Pauline Kolenda (1987: 11-2) presents the following types of joint family on the basis of the relatives who are its members.

a) **Collateral joint family:** It comprises two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond. In this type, usually a brother and his wife and another brother and his wife live together with unmarried children.

b) **Supplemented collateral joint family:** It is a collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives. The supplemented relatives are generally the widowed mother of the married brothers or the widower father, or an unmarried sibling.

c) **Lineal joint family:** Two couples, between whom there is a lineal link, like between a parent and his married son or some times between a parent and his married daughter, live together.

d) **Supplemented lineal joint family:** It is a lineal joint family together with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear families; for example, the father's widower brother or the son's wife's unmarried brother or sister.

e) **Lineal collateral joint family:** In this type three or more couples are linked lineally and collaterally. For instance we can have a family consisting of parents and their two or more married sons together with the unmarried children of the couples.

f) **Supplemented lineal - collateral joint family:** In this type are found a lineal collateral joint family plus unmarried, widowed, separated relatives who belong to one of the nuclear families (lineally and collaterally linked), for example, the father's widowed sister or brother or an unmarried nephew of the father.

Activity 1

Classify fifteen families in your neighbouhood into the categories in terms of the relatives who compose it.

ii) The Number of Generations in One Unit

A joint family is also seen in terms of generations present in it. Some researchers, like I.P. Desai (1964) and T.N. Madan (1965) emphasise that the number of generations present in a family is important for identifying a joint family. A joint family is commonly defined as a three generational family. For instance a man, his married son and his grand children constitute a joint family.

The Sharing of Common Property

Researchers, like F.G. Bailey (1963), T.N. Madan (1961), have advocated the limitation of the term joint family to a group of relatives who form a property owning group, the coparcenary family. M.S. Gore (1968), for instance, defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependants. The wives and young children of these male members are the dependents.

The female members have not been included in the category of the coparcenary. They have rights of residence and maintenance only as dependents. In 1937 an attempt was made to confer the same right, i.e., the right of inheritance of property on a Hindu widow as her son would have in the estate of her deceased husband. The Act enabled her to enjoy the income only from the immovable property of her husband during her lifetime.

Until the passing of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, two systems of inheritance dominated among patrilineal Hindus. In one system (called the Mitakshara school, adopted in most regions) a son has a vested interest in his father's ancestral property from the moment of his birth. The father cannot give away any part of this property to the detriment of his son's interest. Under the other system (the Dayabaga school, adopted in Bengal and Assam) the father is the absolute owner of his share and has a right to alienate his property the way he wants.

Among the patrilineal Hindus, some movable property is given to the daughters at the time of marriage as *stridhana.* With the passing of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a uniform system of inheritance has been established. The individual property of a male Hindu, dying intestate (having made no will), passes in equal shares between his son, daughter, widow and mother. Male and female heirs have come to be treated as equal in matters of inheritance and succession. Another important feature of the Act is that any property possessed by a female Hindu is held by her as her absolute property and she has full power to deal with it the way she likes. This Act has also given a woman the right to inherit from the father as well as from the husband. However the benefit conferred on a woman is limited when compared to the rights of the male members who still have rights to coparcenary ancestral property by birth. Daughters are not part of the coparcenary and have no birthrights.

The difficulty of looking at joint family as a coparcenary family unit is that it does not take into account those joint families, which possess little in the form of immovable or moveable property.

Variability in and Prevalence of Joint Family Living

i) **Variability:** We identified a joint family in terms of what is shared and who shares it. We went through this exercise in this manner so that we can identify and analyse the multitude of factors that make a joint family. But we must remember that a joint family is a composite whole of both the "who and what" components. The exact composition or members and what is actually shared by these members in a particular family will vary through time and will also vary between families.

The following factors relating to the compositional aspect explain these variations within a family and between families.

   a) **The culturally patterned time of break-up:** It differs across caste, community and region. The time, when a married son or brother breaks away to form a separate residential and commensal unit, may vary within a family and between families.

   b) **Demographic profiles:** Based on such factors like average life expectancy, average age at marriage, average number of children born per couple, age of father at the birth of various children etc., we will again find variation in the pattern of joint family living.

   c) **The influence of education, spatial mobility and diversification of occupation** also bring about variation (CSWI 1974: 59).

ii) **Prevalence:** By comparing seventy six studies which included family types across villages, caste communities and other population, Pauline Kolenda (1987: 78) outlined the pattern of prevalence of joint family in India. She observed that (a) joint family both lineal and collateral was more characteristic of higher twice-born castes and least characteristic among the economically poor and the erstwhile untouchables, (b) there are regional differences in the proportion of joint families. For instance, the Gangetic plains showed higher incidence of joint families than Central India, i.e., in Madhya Pradesh, Western Rajasthan, parts of Maharashtra, and (c) there seem to be differences in the customary time of break-up of the joint family in various groups and places in India.

In conclusion, we can say that there is something like a patterned cycle of rearrangement of family living through time. As mentioned before, the family in India has to be viewed as a process, in terms of a developmental cycle. Some studies have described the Indian family types as stages in a family cycle (Desai 1964, Madan 1965, Cohn 1961).

Check Your Progress II

i) List out the five criteria of jointness. Use two lines for your answer.

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ii)   Name in three lines, the six major types of joint family structures as shown by Kolenda.

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Emerging Patterns of Family Living

Today there are varied patterns of family living. In urban areas both male and female members of the family may go for gainful employment outside the home. In some families the parents of the husband may live with his wife and children. While in some others, members of the wife's family may be living with the couple and their children. With both the husband and the wife going outside the home for gainful employment and with the absence or limited availability of child care facilities, presence of kin members to look after the home and children comes handy for the smooth functioning of the household. Those working couples who prefer to live in nuclear families and who fear or resist interference from kin members, try to organise their household with professional help from outside the family (like cooks, maid servants, crèches).

Aged parents, who formerly used to look towards their eldest son or other sons for support in old age, are now adjusting themselves to the new demands of family life by making economic provisions for their old age. Even within a city parents and married sons may reside separately. Another trend in family life in India is that girls are prepared to support their parent in old age, and it is not impossible to find a widowed mother or parents staying with a married daughter (mainly, in the absence of sons) to help her to manage the household. Measures have been provided at the legal level to ensure that dependant old parents are looked after by a daughter if she is self-reliant even after her marriage. Bilateral kinship relations are more and more recognised and accepted today in many nuclear households in the cities.

Besides the above aspects, emerging patterns of family living include instances of domestic violence, utter lack of social and physical security for unmarried women (see Jain 1996a: 7).

Check Your Progress III

i)   What is meant by the cyclical view of family? Use three lines for your answer.

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ii) List in three lines some of the factors, which have negatively affected the joint family system.

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iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Make a T for true or F for false against each statement.

a) Migration from a village to a city has affected the size of the families in which this migration occurred.

b) A joint family is totally dysfunctional in industrial towns and cities.

c) The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 gave women the right to inherit a share of the parental property.

6.4 THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions like that of the family. The institution of marriage and family is closely connected and complementary to each other. Marriage is the institution established by the human society to control and regulate the sex life of man in a legal and customary manner. It has different implications in different cultures. The nature, types and functions of marriage may differ from society to society, but it is present everywhere as an institution.

6.4.1 Meaning and Definition of Marriage

The Collins dictionary of sociology mention that marriage is a socially acknowledge and sometimes legally ratified union between an adult male and adult female. Many sociologists have defined marriage in different perspective. According to Horton and Hunt, "Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family". Malinowski says that marriage is a contract for the production and maintenance of children. Edward Westermark defines marriage as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by custom or law; and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of parties entering the union and the children born of it. Lundberg says that marriage consists of the rule and regulations which define the rights, duties and privileges of husband and wife, with respect to each other. Harry M. Johnson defines marriage as a stable relationship in which a man and woman are socially permitted, without loss of standing in the community, to have children. Mark and Young have said that marriage is the institution or set of norms which determines the particular relation of harmony to each other and to their children.

6.4.2 Universality of Marriage in India

Marriage is an important social institution. It is a relationship, which is socially approved. The relationship is defined and sanctioned by custom and law. The definition of the relationship includes not only guidelines for behaviour relating

to sex but also regarding things like the particular way labour is to be divided and other duties and privileges. Children born of marriage are considered the legitimate offspring of the married couple. This legitimacy is important in the matter of inheritance and succession. Thus marriage is not only a means of sexual gratification but also a set of cultural mechanisms to ensure the continuation of the family. It is more or less a universal social institution in India.

The religious texts of many communities in India have outlined the purpose, rights and duties involved in marriage. Among the Hindus, for instance, marriage is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage. These are *dharma* (duty), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure). That is to say that marriage is significant from both the societal as well as the individual's point of view. Marriage is significant in that it provides 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 support in old age to parents and as the most important source of economic enrichment to the family. Marriage, in the Hindu system, enables a man to enter into the stage of a householder. Both a man and a woman are regarded incomplete without marriage. Even among other communities in India, marriage is regarded as an essential obligation. Islam looks upon marriage as *"sunnah"* (an obligation) which must be fulfilled by every Muslim. Christianity holds marriage as crucial to life and lays emphasis on the establishment of a mutual relationship between husband and wife and on their duty to each other.

The significance attached to marriage is reflected in the fact that only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI 1974: 81) has indicated that only 0.5 per cent of women never marry in India. By and large girls are brought up to believe that marriage is a woman's destiny; married state is desirable and motherhood is a cherished achievement. Only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried by choice. Goals of marriage are, however, undergoing changes especially for the urban and educated sections of the population. The older notions regarding large size family, (i.e., large number of children especially sons being the source of status for parents) are being replaced by preference for small size family. Marriage for self-fulfillment rather than primarily for procreation or societal welfare is also becoming prevalent. (IGNOU 2017 (reprint), ESO-12 Society in India, Block 2, Family, Marriage and Kinship, pp.23)

6.4.3 Rules of Spouse Selection in Marriage

Every society lays down certain rules to select their life-partners or not allowed to marry whomsoever they want. Members have to abide by the prohibitive and prescriptive rules of marriage while selecting their marital partner. Some such rules are discussed here:

1) **Prohibitive Rules**

Prohibitive rules are those which put restriction on men and women from entering into marital alliance with a certain category of people. Some of such rules are as follows: Some of such rules are as follows:

a) **Endogamy**: According to Hoebel, endogamy is a social rule that requires a person to marr within a defined social group of which he is a member. Endogamy is a rule of marriage in which the life-partner become outside the group is prohibited. Marriage is allowed only within the group, and the group may be caste, class, tribe, race, village, religious group, etc.

The purpose of endogamy are for example, to maintain racial purity, geographical separation, religious differences, cultural differences, sense of superiority or inferiority, the policy of separation, the desire to keep wealth within the group, etc.

b) **Exogamy**: According to Hoebel, exogamy is a social rule that prohibits a person from marrying within a defined social group of which she or/ he is a member". It is the opposite form of endogamy rule. Exogamy is the practice of marriage in which an individual has to marry someone outside his or her own group. Every community prohibits its members from having marital relationship within the group. Exogamy marriage assumes various forms in Hindu of India such as gotra and sapinda. Gotra refers to a group of families which share or a common mythical marital ancestor and common blood relatives from the parental side. One marrying outside one's own 'gotra' is called gotra exogamy. Sapinda means that persons cannot inter-marry of seven generations on the father's side and five on the mother's side. In some areas of India, such as, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar etc. a girl and boy from the same village are not permitted to marry because the village is considered to be one unit and they have practice of marrying outside their village.

c) **Incest Taboo**: Prohibition of sex or marital relationship between two persons, who are related to each other by blood ties or, who belong to same family is called incest taboo. In every society, marriage of father-daughter, mother-son, and brother-sister is prohibited. Amongst Hindu, marriage among close kins such as prohibited in North India but in the South it is prescribed to some extent.

d) **Hypergamy** (*Anuloma*) : It is that form of marriage in which a boy from upper caste can marry a girl from lower caste. Thus, a Brahmin boy can marry from any lower caste or Varna girl.

e) **Hypogamy** (*Pratiloma*) : It is that form of marriage in which a boy from lower caste marries a girl from higher caste. In traditional society such marriage were not encouraged or preferred. Hence, it was not possible for a Brahmin girl to marry a boy from lower caste or Varna and get acceptance from society.

Box 6.1

In 1980 the government of India began to take notice of the issue of dowry as oppression against women and took legal action against it. In December 1983 the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act was passed. Section 498-A was added to the Indian Penal Code. Under this Act cruelty to a wife was made a cognizable non-bailable offence, punishable up to three year imprisonment, and a fine. Section 113-A of the Evidence Act was amended so that court

could draw in inference of abetement to suicide (which most dowry deaths are claimed to be) under section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code. (IGNOU: 2000, WED Programme, WED-01, pp.34)

2)   **Preferential or Prescriptive Rules**

The rules of exogamy and endogamy may be preferential or prescriptive which give preference to certain types of alliances over other. In certain cases, the individual may choose a marriage partner within a particular kin group or he may be bound to choose only one such kin. Such type of custom which prescribe as to whom one should marry or prefer to marry are called prescriptive rules. Some of these prescriptive rules are as follow:

1)   *Cross cousin marriage* : The marriage of two individuals who are the children of siblings of opposite sex i.e. a man marries his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter it is called a cross cousin marriage. Such type of marriage is practiced amonthe Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and the Oraon and the Kharia tribes of Jharkhand. Such type of marriage are also found in the Southern part of India. (Hence I 1953)

2)   *Parallel cousin marriage* : The marriage of two individuals who are the children of siblings of the same sex i.e. a man marries his mother's sister's daughter or his father's brother's daughter it is called parallel cousin marriage. Such type of marriage is seen among Muslims.

3)   *Levirate marriage* : Levirate is the practice of custom in which a widow marries her deceased husband's brother. It is also known as Natal or Nantra. Such type of practice is prevalent among the Toda of Nilgiri Hills. It is also known as a Natal or Nantra, marriage. It was also found in some parts of Panjab.

4)   *Sororate* : Sororate is the practice of custom in which a widower marries his deceased wife's sister.

6.4.4   Forms of Marriage

All the commonly listed forms of marriage, namely, **monogamy** (marriage of a man to a woman at a time), and polygamy (marriage of a man or woman to more than one spouse) are found in India. The latter, that is polygamy, has 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). In ancient texts of the Hindus we find references to eight forms of marriage.

Monogamy, Polygyny, Polyandry

In this section, we shall focus only on monogamy, and both forms of polygamy. With regard to the prevalence of these three forms, one has to distinguish between what is permitted and what is practised by different sections of the population through time.

i)   **Monogamy:** Among the Hindus, until the passing of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, a Hindu man was permitted to marry more than one woman at a time. Although permitted, polygyny has not been common among the Hindus. Only limited sections of the population like kings, chieftains, headmen of villages, members of the landed aristocracy actually practised polygyny.

We may say that those who had the means and the power to acquire more than one wife at a time were polygynous. The other important reasons for polygyny were the barrenness of the wife and or her prolonged sickness. Among some occupational groups like the agriculturists and artisans, polygyny prevailed because of an economic gain involved in it. Where women are self-supporting and contribute substantially to the productive activity a man can gain by having more than one wife. Concerted efforts to remove this practice were made in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century by social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati and others. After Independence, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 established monogamy for all Hindus and others who came to be governed by this Act. Some of the 'other' communities covered by this Act are the Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. Strict monogamy is prescribed in Christian and Parsi communities. **Polygyny:** Islam, on the other hand, has allowed polygyny. A Muslim man can have as many as four wives at a time, provided all are treated as equals. However, it seems that polygynous unions have been restricted to a small percentage of Muslims, namely the rich and the powerful.

With regard to the tribal population, we find that the customary law of the tribals in general (except a few) has not forbidden polygyny. Polygyny is more widespread among the tribes of north and central India.

iii) **Polyandry:** Polyandry is even less common than polygyny. A few Kerala castes practised polyandry until recently. The Toda of the Nilgiris in Tamilnadu, the Khasa of Jaunsar Bawar in Dehradun district of Uttaranchal and some North Indian castes practise polyandry. In the fraternal form of polyandry, the husbands are brothers. In 1958, C.M. Abraham (1958: 107-8) has reported that in Central Travancore fraternal polyandry was practised by large number of groups like the Irava, Kaniyan, the Vellan and the Asari.

The factors that are related to the prevalence of polyandry are:

a)   desire to prevent division of property within a family (especially in fraternal polyandry).

b)   desire to preserve the unity and solidarity of the sibling group (in fraternal polyandry).

c)   the need for more than one husband in a society where men are away on a commercial or military journey.

d)   a difficult economy, especially an unfertile soil, which does not favour division of land and belongings (Peter 1968).

Prevailing Patterns

What is the position today regarding these forms of marriage? Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage in India. However, bigamous (having two spouses at a time) marriages have been reported among the Hindus in many parts of India. It is the man who very often commits bigamy and escapes punishment by turning the loopholes of the law to his advantage. It is the wife who is often unaware of his second marriage, and even if she is aware of it, is unaware of her legal rights and accepts her fate. Social and economic dependence on husband and inadequate social condemnation of the man's actions are some of the reasons for the wife's acceptance of the husband's second marriage.

Among the Muslims it is the man who is allowed to have four wives. Among them men enjoy greater privileges than women. A Muslim woman cannot marry a second time when her first husband is alive or if she has not been divorced by him.

6.5 THE INSTITUTION OF KINSHIP

The family, marriage and kinship are closely interrelated with each other in terms of social relationship. Kinship is universal and represents one of the basic social institutions. Kinship is a method which provides the framework of social relationship. Kinship means relationship of the individual with the other members based either on marriage or blood-ties. Kinship bonds are very strong and such ties are of fundamental importance in every society all over the world. The husband, wife, son, daughter, brother and sister relationships due to either a bond of marriage or through blood are known as kinship relations. Kinship is that part of culture through which relations are socially recognized through birth and through marriage or adoption.

Murdock says that it is a structured system of relationship in which individuals are bound to one another by complex interlocking and ramifying ties. According to Radcliff-Brown, "Kinship system is a part of social structure and insists upon the study of kinship as a field of rights and obligations". Robin Fox says that kinship is simply the relations between 'kin' that is persons related by real, putative or fictive consanguinity.

6.5.1 Significance of Kinship

The kinship system refers to a set of persons recognised as relatives, either by virtue of a blood relationship technically called consanguinity, or by virtue of a marriage relationship, that is through what is called affinity.

Most of us tend to regard the kinship system into which we are born and in which we are reared as natural. It will seem natural and right to us that certain close relatives should be tabooed as marriage and sexual partners, and we feel quite certain that disastrous consequences would follow any infringement of the taboos. We may similarly think it natural that certain classes of persons be preferred as marriage partners, or we may on the contrary think it very unnatural that any persons be so designated.

6.5.2 Basic Concepts of Kinship

We have already made the general point that kinship relations are the outcome of the cultural interpretation of relations given in nature, and discussed some of the different ways in which sociologists have looked at the kinship system. In doing so, we have indirectly introduced some of the basic terms and concepts in kinship studies, which we will now set out more systematically. You certainly do not need to memorise this rather overwhelming set of technical terms, but you should try to understand the basic principles and distinctions that these key terms seek to convey.

6.5.2.1 The Principle of Descent

Descent is the principle whereby a child is socially affiliated with the group of his or her parents. In some societies the child is regarded as a descendant equally

of both the father and the mother, except that titles and surnames are usually passed down along the male line. Such a system is termed Bilateral or Cognatic. The individual belongs simultaneously to several descent groups – those of the two parents, the four grandparents, the eight great-grandparents, and so on. This link is limited only by memory or by some conventionally determined cut-off point at, say, four or five degrees removal. In small intermarrying communities, membership will probably overlap, and in case of dispute or feud, the individual might find his or her loyalties divided. There are some cognatic systems where the individual has the right by descent to membership of several cognatically recruited groups, but this right is actualised only if the person is able to reside in a particular group's territory. Modern nationality laws often make this type of requirement.

6.5.2.2 Types of Descent

In other societies, by contrast and your own is most probably one of them-descent is reckoned UNILINEALLY, that is, in one line only. The child is affiliated **either** with the group of the father, that is, PATRILINEAL DESCENT, or with the group of the mother, that is, MATRILINEAL DESCENT. Theories of the physiology of procreation and conception often correlate with these different modes of reckoning descent. In the former, the father is often given the primary role in procreation while the mother is regarded as merely the carrier of the child; in systems of the latter type the father's role may not be acknowledged at all.

Additionally, in some societies one finds that the child is affiliated to the group of either parent, depending on choice, or to one parent for some purposes (for instance, inheritance of property) and to the other parent for other purposes (for instance, the inheritance of ritual or ceremonial roles). This is called DOUBLE UNILINEAL DESCENT.

The principle of unilineal descent provides the individual an unambiguous identification with a bounded social group that exists before he or she is born and that has continuity after he or she dies. Members of a descent group have a sense of shared identity, often referring to each other as 'brother 'and 'sister' even when no genealogical relationship can be traced. Descent groups are also very often, (though not inevitably), characterised by exogamy. That is, marriage must be with persons outside this group. For instance, traditional Chinese society was divided among approximately a hundred 'surname' groups-you could perhaps call them CLANS-within which marriage was disallowed, and these groups further divided into LINEAGES, whose members claimed to be able to trace their descent, perhaps for several hundred year, from a founding ancestor, and then into further localised SUBLINEAGES and so on down to the individual co-resident families. Sometimes a whole village might be settled by members of a single lineage. The gotras of Indian caste society are also exogamous descent groups, segmented in rather the same way.

Activity 2

Interview or discuss with some members of your family and prepare a chart indicating five generation of your family on your fathers' side or mothers' side whichever is relevant to you. Write a note of one page on "The kinship structure of My Family". Discuss your note with other students and Academic Counsellor at your study centre.

6.6 FUNCTIONS OF DESCENT GROUPS

Apart from the function of exogamy, unilineal descent groups tend to be 'corporate' in several other senses. Their members may often come together for ritual and ceremonial functions, for instance, for collective worship of lineage gods, totems or ancestors. The descent group will have a built-in authority structure, with power normally exercised by senior males, and it may well own corporate property. An individual's economic rights and responsibilities will be defined by his or her position in the descent group. In many societies unilineal descent groups are also jural units, internally deciding their own disputes, and externally acting as a unified group in the conduct of feud, etc. For this reason, lineage structure is often coterminous with the political structure in societies lacking a centralised state structure.

Lineages cannot expand indefinitely in a single locality and often segment into smaller, more manageable and economically viable lineage segments. You can see the lines of segmentation of the ground, as it were. Consider the pattern of land ownership in an Indian village; or at the pattern of village or urban settlement; particular quarter of the village or town may be inhabited by the descendants of a single founding ancestor. Often, the large **havelis** divide among brothers or step-brothers, and these quarters are further divided among their descendants. In case a line dies out, the property would be reconsolidated. Given the range of social functions that descent groups may potentially perform, it is little wonder that concern with the principles of unilineal descent has dominated the work of many students of comparative kinship. However, even these scholars realise that unilineal descent is not the whole story. In ancient Rome, women after marriage severed all contact with their natal group. In certain slave societies, the slave has no 'family' of his or her own. In patrilineal systems, the mother's father, mother's sister, and especially the mother's brother, are important relationships which need further discussion. To take note of the importance of relationships, the scholars have identified another principle. This has been termed the principle of COMPLEMENTARY FILIATION which explains the significant ritual and social roles of the mother's brother(s) in the lives of their sister's children. It reminds us that, in most societies, an individual is a child of both parents, however descent is formally reckoned.

6.6.1 Inheritance Rules

Rules of inheritance tend to co-ordinate with the reckoning of descent in most societies, but not necessarily in a one-to-one manner. In fact, it is quite often the case that certain types of property pass from father to son, and other types from mother to daughter. In most parts of India, in the past, immovable property such as land and housing, was inherited only by sons. In the absence of sons, except under rare circumstances, by the nearest male relatives on the father's side. On the other hand, movable property in the form of cash and jewellery was given to the daughter at the time of her marriage, with a certain amount of jewellery also passing from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.

In addition to property of various kinds, rights and obligations, esoteric knowledge, crafts and skills, etc., might be passed on in accordance with kinship roles, succession to office to chieftainship, kingship, etc.-and to other social roles and statuses, is also very often determined by kinship criteria. In such cases, the individual's status is said to be 'ascribed', not 'achieved'. It is commonly

asserted that ascriptive status of "modern", industrial societies. There is a great deal of truth in this statement, but one should not underestimate the importance of kinship connections in modern societies too. Often one finds that in a family if father is a doctor or lawyer the son or daughter is also likely to choose the same occupation. Most of the Indian women who have been successful in the political domain are either daughters, sisters or wives of people who have been active in politics. One such example is the Nehru family of India.

6.6.2 Rules of Residence

Rules of residence, meaning residence after marriage, are an important variable in a kinship system, and substantially affect the quality of personal relations within the kin network. If husband and wife set up their own independent home after marriage, as is usually the case in modern western society, residence is said to be NEOLOCAL. Where the wife goes to live with the husband in his parents' home, residence is described as VIRILOCAL, PATRILOCAL, or PATRIVIRILOCAL, and where the husband moves to live with the wife, it is termed MATRILOCAL or Rules of residence may or may not 'harmonise' with the rules of descent. On the whole, patrilineal descent systems correlate with either neolocal or patrivirilocal residence patterns. However, matrilineal descent systems may be combined with all three types of residence. It is also combined with what is called AVUNCULOCAL residence, that is, residence with the mother's brother.

6.6.3 Patriarchy and Matriarchy

A society is said to have a patriarchal structure when a number of factors coincide, i.e. when descent is reckoned patrilineally, when inheritance of major property is from father to son, when residence is patrilocal, and when authority is concentrated in the hands of senior males. There is, however, no society on earth, nor any society actually known to have existed, whose features are the exact reverse of these. For even in matrilineal, matrilocal systems, which are fairly rare, major property is usually controlled by males. And authority is normally exercised by males, though women may well have a higher status in the family and greater powers of decision-making than in the patriarchal set up. Some anthropologists assert that in societies with very simple technology and minimal property, relations between the sexes are relatively egalitarian, whether descent is formally matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral, but others insist that women, and children, have played subordinate roles in all human societies.

For this reason, the term 'matriarchy', though often found in the literature, is probably a misnomer, best avoided, and there is certainly no conclusive evidence to support the view that matriarchy was a universal early stage in the development of kinship systems. (IGNOU 2017 (Reprint ESO-11 The Study of Society Block 2, pp-25-30)

Check Your Progress IV

i)   What is the principle of descent? Explain in one line.

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ii)   List the types of descent. Use about three lines for your answer.

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6.7   LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have explained the different aspects of the social institutions of family, marriage and kinship. All three concepts are inter-related with each other and form the very core of any community or society. We defined these concepts and described their salient features to you. Also, in this unit we have outlined the significance and functions of family, marriage and kinship. When you interrogate Indian society the different aspects highlighted in this unit form the very core of society in India.

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6.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i) a) F

    b) T

ii) a) Supplemented nuclear family

    b) Sub nuclear family

    c) Single person household

    d) Supplemented sub nuclear family.

Check Your Progress II

i) Commensality; Common Residence; Common Property; Cooperation and Sentiment and Ritual bonds.

ii) Collateral joint family, Supplemented collateral joint family, Lineal joint family, Supplemented joint family, Lineal collateral joint family, Supplemented-lineal-collateral joint family.

Check Your Progress III

i) In the cyclical view the nuclear and the joint family can be viewed as a continuum. A nuclear family develops into a joint family after marriage of a son and coming of a daughter-in-law. After the death of the father the sons may separate to form separate nuclear units. Later on each of these nuclear families may develop into a joint family.

ii) Factors affecting the joint family system are: (a) western secular education, (b) market cash economy, (c) salaried occupations, (d) laws, and (e) urbanisation.

iii) a) T

     c) F

     d) T

Check Your Progress IV

i) Descent is the principle by which a person traces his/her ancestors.

ii) The following is the list of the types of descent:

    • Unilineal descent including (a) patrilineal descent (b) matrilineal descent.

    • Double-unilineal descent bilateral or cognatic descent.

UNIT 7   RELIGION*

Structure

7.0   OBJECTIVES

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

*   describe relationship between religion and society;

*   discuss major sociological theories of religion and their prominent aspects;

*   explain the difference between a theological and sociological explanation of religion;

*   describe the nature of religion as a social phenomenon;

*   explain the emergence and nature of religions in India;

*   discuss the historical factors that played decisive role in the emergence of different religions in India; and

*   outine the core teachings of some diverse religions of India.

7.1   INTRODUCTION

The existence of religion in human society is one of the enduring social phenomena stimulating sociological analysis. It is a social phenomenon which is woven into the fabric of everyday social life. It seems to play a solidifying function in society however religion has also been used to spread hatred and crimes against humanity. It has been one of the major sources of justifying inequality and exploitation. Still religion as an institution appears to exist in

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every society. Sociologists have tried to understand the meanings that religion offers to people. Its significance in the organisation of social life is immense. It appears to help people in approaching and addressing the crisis situation in life. Scholars have argued that religion gives meaning to the human life to such an extent that it is characterised as the relief to the people who are trapped in the hardships of life. Its impact on human affairs is intoxicating like opium. It does not exist as a fixed phenomenon, but keeps changing its nature according to the broader socio-economic changes in material conditions of society. Sociologists have studied the evolution of religion from primitive to the 'modern' societies. Its role in 'modern' societies is being felt to be eroded or minimised but one may see the expansion of religious identities conflicts and movements. In this backdrop, it becomes all the more important to understand the emergence of diverse religions of India and their contemporary character.

7.2 SOCILOGICAL THEORIES EXPLAINING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

This section briefly sketches the sociological theories that explain the relationship between religion and society. A sociological understanding across theoretical frameworks certainly informs that religion is a creation of humans. Within classical sociology, religion has been seen as an important theme. Sociological explanations of religion are less concerned with the theological issues than the social contextualisation of religion. Sociologically religion is defined as a social institution. In sociology we do not attempt to prove or disprove the existence of god rather we try to understand why people believe in God. Three stalwarts in classical sociology – Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber figure prominently in explaining the relationship between religion and society. Their intellectual engagement with religion and society offers multifaceted aspect of religion as a social institution.

7.2.1 Emile Durkheim

Emile Durkheim, a French sociologist, is regarded as the prolific author in the field of sociology of religion. His major contribution in this area is that he postulates the idea that religion is socially constructed and not of divine origin. The nature of religion, for him, is shaped by the prevailing social conditions. In his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (*1961*)*, Durkheim was concerned with the origins and causes of religion in society. He studied various primitive groups of Australia and North America to study the most rudimentary religious forms. He turned towards the study of elementary forms of religion (in this case **totemism**) as he wanted to make sense of religion in the complex societies through the study of organisation of religion in simple societies. According to him the most elementary form of religion would be found in those primitive tribal communities which are having an elementary social organisation.

According to Durkheim there are two basic components of religion i.e. beliefs and rites. He calls beliefs as **collective representations** which are products of the underlying social structures and rites which pertain to the operative part of the belief system i.e. various modes of action produced by beliefs. He reasoned that religion is a group phenomenon as its basic characteristic and unity is given

by the group. In this way he emphasises on the positive function of religion as a force cementing the society together. The **functional theory** of religion as propounded by Durkheim hinders any study of the **dysfunctions** of religion. This explains, for Durkheim, the reason for the ubiquity and permanency of religion. 'Religious force' is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members. It is projected and objectified in outer world and the consciousness. He classifies beliefs into two separate spheres of **'sacred'** and **'profane'.** He identifies 'sacred' as the most fundamental religious phenomenon. 'Sacred' is that part of religion which is set apart and forbidden and considered holy. 'Sacred' is venerated and placed in higher position to profane things. 'Profane' stands in opposition to 'sacred' and refers to the mundane aspects of everyday life. Durkheim writes that 'all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or radically opposed to one another; i.e. the sacred and the profane.

7.2.2 Max Weber

Max Weber, a German sociologist, is known to have developed a theory of religion in which the economic relevance of religion is demonstrated. In his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1948)*,* he assessed the contribution of Protestant ethics in the development of modern economic system of capitalism. For him Protestant ethics played a decisive role in the development of capitalism in the West, whereas it could not develop in Asian countries such as India. It is considered that the religious ethics of Hinduism, with regard to caste, hinders development of capitalism according to Weber. He considered Hinduisms, as another worldly religion. Caste imposed structural restraints on economic development. (However, later scholars like Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn studied the Madras capitalists who did not subscribe to Weber's ideas on Hinduism) He argues that there is a fundamental difference between Protestants and Catholics in terms of their inclination towards industrial and commercial actions. Protestants could acquire industrial skills and explored modern occupations and avenues of administrative positions whereas Catholics remained in traditional occupations. According to him, Protestants have methodical and ascetic norms of conduct which is the essential spirit of capitalism.

7.2.3 Karl Marx

Karl Marx, a German philosopher has developed the critical theory of religion unlike Durkheim and Weber. Marx was more concerned with how religion generate a **false consciousness** of the existing social reality thereby normalising and justifying the unequal social structure and giving people an illusory happiness. Marx was not only theorising the relationship between religion and society and how does religion affects human behaviour, but he was also addressing how to change the unequal structure of society which is disguised in religion. In this way, Marx was primarily dealing with the political aspects of religion rather than the functionality as Durkheim was. In his materialist conception of history, Marx argued that religion is actually a reflection of the material conditions of society. To quote him, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness (1859)." This means that ideas at the level of consciousness cannot solely determine the social structure as Weber has propounded. Religious idea can justify the prevailing socio-economic conditions but cannot produce them alone. Religion cannot exist in an isolated fashion from the socio-economic

structure. In this way Marx's thesis on religion is opposite to Weber's understanding.

7.3 SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN INDIA

India has a diversity of religions. Before one understands this diversity of religions, their emergence and core elements, it is essential for any student of sociology to grasp how studies on religion and society has been initiated in India. Orientalist and Indological approaches on religion in India have played a decisive role in the construction of a sociological understanding on religion. (some aspects of these you learnt in Unit 1 of this course)Therefore, it is imperative to read these two approaches.

Activity 1

Read a book or watch a movie on religion, magic and science. Write the significance of religion and society on the basis of your ideas from it. Discuss with other students at your study center or family members the relation between all three of them.

7.3.1 Oriental and Indological Constructions of Religion in India

Orientalism as defined by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* (1978:3) means a discourse based on the dichotomy of East and West where the West becomes the reference point for defining progress. It has provided ideological justification to colonialism and its expansion. When West (Occident) is seen as the reference point for progress and growth, by default the East (Orient) appears as the backward and in need of 'modernization'. He has unleashed a strong critique of Orientalist discourse which was legitimising the colonial aggression and loot. It was manufacturing the ideological ground for the political supremacy of colonial powers. "Orientalism refers to those particular discourses that, in conceptualising the Orient, render it susceptible to control and management (King 2001:82) "Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, and so on. Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient." Said's work clearly indicates towards the complicity i.e understanding between the scholarly accounts of the nature of 'the Orient' and the hegemonic political agenda of imperialism.

In this backdrop, it is obvious that British colonials have constructed an image of the oriental India in such a manner that the subjugation of India as a colony appears as natural and inevitable. There are various studies on religion in India conducted by Britishers that served this larger goal of colonial dominance. In this backdrop Orientalism meets Indology. Indology, in simple terms means the study of Indian culture and society. It was the administrative need of the British Empire to conduct systematic studies on the nature of Indian society. Such studies were primarily based on the textual view of Indian society. Although, Britishers used survey method extensively to document the customs of people in India. But indologists saw scriptures as the major source of information on the character of Indian society. This belief was largely manufactured by the reliance of the British

Indologists conducted studies on the native people with the help of mosly Brahmins. Many of the scriptural texts were translated by Indologists with the help of local Brahmins. Consequently the understanding of religion in India was inspired by the brahamanical view. Bernard Cohn in his celebrated book *An Anthropologist Among Historians and Other Essays* (1987) has offered a detailed description of the brahamanical view of religion in India.

British indologists propagated their view of religion in India through various means such as education and their means of communication. One of the classic examples of how they have constructed an understanding of religion in India is the classification of Indian history in terms of religion of the rulers. James Mill, the British historian, in his three volume work *A History of British India* divided Indian history in three major periods – Hindu, Muslim and British. This periodisation is problematic i.e it leads to misunderstanding about India. Although, he did not name the British rule as Christian period but it does not come as a surprise that to view the religious conflicts in India as Hindu-Muslim conflict and the religious conflict in general is a colonial construction which continues even today.

The construction of Indianness in terms of Hindu identity has its roots in the oriental-indological perspectives. The core of Indian religiosity was traced through the vedic scriptures. The diversity of religious philosophies was reduced to a homogenous category of 'Hinduism'. The specific nature of Hinduism is the product of the interaction between brahmins and colonial orientalists.

Check Your Progress I

i) Discuss the ideas of Emile Durkheim on religion and society in about five lines.

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ii) How does Max Weber relate religion with economy?

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iii) What does Karl Marc believe about the role of religion in society? Explain.

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The story of the colonial expansion is based or premised on the oriental constructions of Indian society but the same oriental construction became the basis to fight against colonialism. In India the nationalist leaders have used oriental constructions in the fight against British colonialism by the Indian leaders and the people. For instance, the "orientalist presuppositions about the 'spirituality' of India was used by reformers, such as, Rammohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and M. K. Gandhi in the development of an anti-colonial Hindu nationalism. This reflects the level of absorption or permeation of orientalist ideas amongst the native Indians also the colonial educated intelligentsia of India. Although, the orientalist discourses did not proceed in an orderly and straightforward fashion but they were applied in ways unforeseen by those who initiated them. The orientalist discourses soon became appropriated by Indian intellectuals in the nineteenth century and applied in such a way as to undercut the colonialist agenda. One of the streams of nationalist movement was based on the Hindu nationalism propagating the idea that India is a Hindu rashtra. The homogenised category of 'Hinduism' generated by oriental scholars has been a prime site of the 'othering' of minorities in India.

Activity 2

Discuss with any two persons in your friends circle, belonging to two different religions; what they think is the core value and belief of their religion. Write an essay of one page on religion as a belief and practice. Compare your essays with those of other students at your Study Center.

7.4 SOME MAJOR RELIGIONS IN INDIA

Given the complexity and diversity of the religious traditions in India, it is difficult to enumerate and narrate them here. The Census of India identifies seven religious communities – Hindu, Muslims, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and other religions and persuasions including unclassified sects. According to the Census 2011 following is the percentage of people belonging to these religious communities:

Hindu – 79.80 per cent

Muslim – 14.23 per cent

Christian – 2.30 per cent

Sikh – 1.72 per cent

Buddhist – 0.70 per cent

Jain – 0.37 per cent

Other religions and persuasions – 0.66 per cent

Religion not stated – 0.24 per cent

Here we are going to describe only some of these major religions in India for your understanding

7.4.1 Hinduism

Sociologically there are debates on whether Hinduism is a religion or not. **Max Weber** in *The Religion of India* (1958) postulates that the term 'Hinduism' is a western coinage and it is not a religion. The term 'Hindu', according to Weber is

an official designation used in the Census introduced by British colonials in India. The term was used to describe the religious complex rather than one religion. Historians have argued that Hinduism is not a monolithic religion but an umbrella category used for a diversity of sects. Hinduism is also defined as a way of life, rather than a religion. B.R.Ambedkar remarks that Hindus find it baffling to answer the question 'why is she/he a Hindu' due to multiplicity of gods, beliefs, customs, and practices. Such sociological and historical enquiries stand in opposition to the contemporary political usage of the term 'Hinduism' as a religion practiced by Hindus. Historical method informs that the term 'Hindu' (with whom Hinduism is associated) originated with the Arabs who referred to people living beyond Indus River as 'Hindu'. Historians (Thapar, 2010) have used the expression 'syndicated Hinduism' to address the political manoeuvring around the term 'Hinduism'. One of the acclaimed sociological enquiries of 'Hinduism' in India is M.N.Srinivas's and A.M.Shah's essay on 'Hinduism' in which they argue that the doctrines of Hinduism, unlike Christianity and Islam, are not embodied in one book. It has a vast body of sacred literature. Hinduism does not have one founder. Subsequently, Hinduism does not have a god but innumerable gods. It is polytheistic in nature. They further write that there is no commonality of beliefs and practices and institutions. Hinduism contains many sects that developed historically and many a times depict contradictory practices and beliefs for example the Vaish airtes and the Shairtes sects of South India who as both part of Hindusim. Indian sociologist **T.N.Madan** in **'**The Sociology of Hinduism: Reading 'Backwards' from Srinivas to Weber' (2006) argues regardless of whether Hinduism is a religion or not, it is undeniably a cultural tradition a way of life stimulating sociological analysis.

Srinivas who postulated the '**field view'** as against the '**book view'** criticises the '**bibliocentricism'** and argues that it is essential that the textual view of Hinduism is connected with the actual behaviour of people. The normative cannot be taken as the cornerstone of any social analysis. People do not always abide by the prescribed texts as the concrete material conditions influence social behaviour. So one must look at the relationship between the text and the actual behaviour. Srinivas and Shah argue that Hinduism is entangled with Hindu social order to such an extent that it becomes difficult to demarcate them. In this backdrop, Srinivas challenges the book view of Hindu social order that describe the divine origin of four *varnas*. According to Srinivas, in reality it is not *varnas* but innumerable *jatis* that exist. "When the Hindu sacred or legal texts discuss caste, it is mostly *varna* that they have in view and very rarely *jati*." The centrality of caste system to Hinduism is also discussed by Weber. "Caste, that is, the ritual rights and duties it gives and imposes, and the position of the Brahmans, is the fundamental institution of Hinduism. Before everything else, without caste there is no Hindu."

Theologically the ideas of *dharma, karma* and *moksha* provide the ideological justification for caste system. Ideas regarding **purity** and **pollution** are also cardinal in Hinduism.

Box 7.0: Concepts of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha

A life of righteousness for a Hindu is possible through the fourfold scheme of practical endeavour. It comprises the concepts of *dharma, artha,* kama and *moksha.*

i) Dharma is honest and upright conduct of righteous action.

ii) Artha means a righteous and honest pursuit of economic activities.

iii) Kama is the fulfilment of one's normal desires.

iv) Moksha is liberation that is absorption of the self into eternal bliss.

Related to these four concepts are the concepts of *karma* and *samsara*. Depending upon one's deeds (*karma*) one is able to reach the stage of *moksha* or liberation. The stage of *mokhsa* or liberation is a term for describing the end of the cycle of birth and rebirth. The cycle of birth and rebirth is known as *samsara*. The Hindus believe that each human being has a soul and that this soul is immortal. It does not perish at the time of death. The process of birth and rebirth goes on until *moksha* is attained. This cycle of transmigration is also known as *samsara,* which is the arena where the cycle of birth and rebirth operates. One's birth and rebirth in a particular state of existence is believed by the Hindus to be dependent on the quality of one's deeds (*karma*). For a Hindu, the issue of liberation is of prarmount significance (Prabhu 1979: 43-48).

7.4.2 Islam

Islam emerged in Arabia in sixth century. It is a monotheistic religion, Quran being the only Holy book. Quran's major teaching is summarised in 'five pillars' namely – having faith in the creed, offering *namaz* five times a day, paying legal alms i.e. *zakat*, fasting during Ramzan, and pilgrimage to Mecca.

These beliefs and practices, according to Islamic theology, make a Muslim win over his passions and desires and attain a place in Heaven.

In fact the word 'Islam' means an absolute submission to God.

With regard to the founder of religion, there are two major sects which have emerged claiming one founder – Sunni and Shia. Sunnis believe in the authority of Prophet Mohammad, whereas Shias claim that succession belongs to Imams.

If we go by Srinivas's distinction between 'book view' and 'field view', then you will find that Islam in India has a different character. The caste system emerged in ancient India and central to Hinduism has its impact on Islam, thereby giving birth to a system of stratification different from the place of Islam's origin. Although "the acceptance of the caste principle among the Muslims is considerably weak and does not enjoy any sanction or justification in their great traditional religious ideology", Ahmad 1978: xxiii) Imtiaz Ahmad, renowned Indian scholar, in his book *Caste and Social Stratification among the Muslims* (1973) argues that caste exists among Muslims. Although, caste type categories based on purity and pollution do not exist among them.

The plurality of culture in India is incomplete without Islam. It has contributed to a greater extent in shaping the composite cultural heritage of India.

7.4.3 Sikhism

"Of the great religious traditions of humanity, Sikhism is one of the youngest, being barely 500 years old. (Madan, 2011:76)" Sikhism emerged as a challenge to the feudal social norms in Indian society. It is essentially a religious philosophy

that stands in opposition to the Vedantic philosophy. It was founded by Guru Nanak in the fifteenth century whose teachings formed the foundation of Sikhism. It draws elements from the nirguna saints for its theological opposition to the caste system, hence Sikhism reflects a syncretic tradition. Guru Nanak carried forward the legacy of Kabir's thought that rejected caste and religious differences espousing opposition to scriptural knowledge and rituals. Both Kabir and Nanak were bhakti saints in medieval period of Indian history. Kabir, Nanak and other bhakti saints questioned and rejected the caste differences. They laid emphasis on *ikk* (one) God who could be apprehended within the hearts rather than by adherence to empty rituals. Along with monotheism, Sikkhism has elements of materiality for the reason that it did not preach the denouncing of the world for spiritual elevation. Three principles of Nanak's teaching are expressed in three punjabi words – *Naam Japna, Kirti Karni* and *Wand Chakna* which means 'always remembering god', 'earning one's livelihood through honest means' and 'sharing the fruits of one's labour with others' respectively. It clearly signifies the aspects of material philosophy. To implement the idea of equality, Nanak started the institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* which imply that all humans, irrespective of their caste and religion, sit in a congregation and practice commensality i.e. eat together from the community kitchen. Guru Nank was accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim musician, in his journeys to spread his gospel of love and truth. Given this syncretic nature of Sikhism, the Adi Granth, the holy book of Sikhs, contains the poems of bhakti and sufi saints such as Kabir, Namdev and Ravidas, who come from the lower strata of Hindu and Muslim communities.

There is an emphasis on the institution of Guruship in Sikhism. Nanak was followed by nine successive Gurus. The successive Gurus made significant contributions besides continuing with Nanak's precepts and ideals. For instance, the second Guru, Guru Angad Dev evolved Gurmukhi, a distinctive script. The Adi Granth, was written in Gurmukhi langauge.

7.4.4 Christianity

Christian Community: The Spatial and Demographic Dimensions

In India there is no one homogeneous Christian community, but there are many different ones, organised around regional, language and sectarian bases. There are: Kerala, Goan Tamil, Anglo-Indians in North India, Naga and North East Indian Christians, who are different in their language, socio-cultural practices and economic status. It is difficult to speak about a general Christian way of life in India for these very reasons. There are many churches, many denominations or groups, many sects or brotherhoods among them.

According to the 1981 Census there were 18 million Christians in India and the percentage of Christians in India's population accounted to 2.43 per cent. The total Christian population had almost kept up with the national increase of 24.69 per cent over 1971-81. In 1991 their population was 2.32 per cent of the total population. However, the distribution of Christian population has been very uneven in India. There are dense settlements of Christians in some parts of the country while in other regions there are small and scattered Christian communities. In Andhra Pradesh, in the year 1981, the Christians represented 2.68 per cent of the total population. In Kerala the percentage of Christians was 20.6. So also Manipur had a 29.7 per cent Christian population.

In fact, Meghalaya with 52.6 per cent and Nagaland with 80.2 per cent registered the highest concentration of Christian populations. Tamil Nadu had 5.78 per cent Christian which was over twice the national average. Very low percentages of the Christian population had been recorded in some central and northern states of the country. For example, Jammu and Kashmir 0.14 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 0.7 per cent, Rajasthan 0.12 per cent and Uttar Pradesh 0.15 per cent. In 1991, the highest concentration of Christians was found in Nagaland (87.46 per cent) and Meghalaya (85.73 per cent). In some States such as Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana etc. the Christian population was very low.

However, in spite of regional variations as described above there are certain tenets, which unite Christian life and experience all over the country. The first of these is that all Christians believe that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is their saviour. They believe that Jesus was born to Mary, a virgin, and that God, the Father, sent him to redeem people of their sins. The concept of virgin birth is accepted alike by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians in India. Christianity asserts that Jesus was the Son of God. However, Jesus' father on earth was Joseph. He was a carpenter who protected Mary and took her away to Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born in a stable. The story of the poverty surrounding Jesus' birth is a very important one for Christians. It establishes the background of much of what Jesus taught, and the manner in which his teachings celebrated poverty, meekness and humility.

Box 7.1

Here is an example where religions involves itself with politics to bring about social justice.Christianity has long addressed the suffering of the oppressed people of the world. Through a belief in a better life to come for the faithful. However a number of religious leaders in Latin America, in a radical move, are emphasising on social justice. This movement in Christianity is called liberation theology. Liberation theology developed in the late 1960s within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. In simple terms, liberation theology believes that the church has responsibility to help people liberate themselves from poverty.

7.4.5 Buddhism

Buddhism emerged in India during sixth century BC. It is known by the name of its founder Gautama Buddha. By the time Buddhism emerged in ancient India, a highly complex structure of stratification on the lines of caste had taken its roots in society. It was a period of rapid transformation and reformulation of political structures. There were two kinds of political structures of governance existing at the time of Buddha – monarchical kingdoms and *gana-sanghas*, the republican territories. The *gana-sanghas* were ruled by clans. Buddha himself was a prince, being the son of the chief of Sakya clan. Both monarchical kingdoms and republican territories were in constant conflict due to the political motives of expansion and consolidation of kingdoms. Rice cultivation and rich iron ores were its primary source of wealth and expansion. It was the phase of arrival of urbanisation in ancient India.

The philosophical ideas of Buddhism were innovative and remarkably different from the existing philosophy of Brahamanism of sixth century BC. Buddhism is essentially a rejection of the basic beliefs of Brahamanism thereby challenging

the authority of *Vedas*. "Within India Buddhism has appeared as an alternative to the hierarchical and inegalitarian ideology and practice of Hinduism. In contrast Buddhism is viewed as a system which was more sympathetic to oppressed groups and it has been considered an economic, political, and social solution to the problem of caste oppression." (Chakravarti, 1996:1) Unlike the abstract spirituality of Brahamanism, Buddhism emphasised on the materiality of this world. It did not emphasise on the creation and preservation of universe by God. It believed in the natural cosmic rise and decline. It did not talk much about gods. It dealts with everything in a dialectical manner and never sought answers in metaphysical domain. Buddha developed a theory of cause and effect which is different from the *Vedic* theory of *Karma*. "Independence from deities was also evident in Buddhist ideas about the origin of government and the state. Whereas Vedic Brahmanism invoked the gods in association with the origin of government, Buddhism described it as a process of gradual social change in which the institution of the family and the ownership of fields led to civil strife. Such strife could only be controlled by people electing a person to govern them and to establish laws for their protection: an eminently logical way of explaining the origins of civil strife and the need for law." (Thapar, 2002: 168). There are other major religious, like Jainism, Zoroastrian and several tribal religions followed by a substantial number of people in India. These religions also play an important role in understanding society in India.

Check Your Progress III

i)   Tick the correct answer

    A)   a)   Hinduism is a belief system

           b)   Hinduism believes in several Gods

           c)   It is a way of life

           d)   All of the above

    B)   Tick the incorrect answer

        a)   Islam believes in one God

        b)   It is divided into two main sects of Shias and Sunnis

        c)   Its followed by people only in India

        d)   A Muslim offers prayers five times a day.

ii)   Who founded Buddhism and what were the conditions in which it originated?

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7.5   LET US SUM UP

You have read that religion is a social phenomenon. The classical sociological theories of classical thinkers like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber have drawn a relationship between religion and society. They have differences in terms of how the relationship between society and religion can be looked at, but the common aspect of these theories is that religion is the creation of humans unlike the theological perspectives that emphasise on the divine origin of religion and society. The nature of the relationship between society and religion in India is outlined through the Oriental and Indological perspectives. Towards the end we have discussed the diversity of religious beliefs in India. We have explained briefly the emergence and arrival of various religions in India and their core values.

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7.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i) Emile Durkheim, a French Sociologist, believes that nature of religion is shaped by the social conditions in which it exists. It is, therefore, socially constructed. He studied the elementary forms of religion, since he believed that the primitive religions i.e. totemism explains the religious focus of the more complex societies.

ii) Karl Marx, a German philosopher, developed a critical theory of religion, unlike Durkheim and Max Weber. He says that religion is a 'false consciousnesses' developed by people to disguise the inherent social inequalities and disparities of poverty etc. that exists in society. It is, for this reason he believes that religion is the 'opium of the masses' which enables them to accept their social existence.

iii) Max Weber, a German Sociologist in his celebrated book, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' developed the thesis that the Protestant ethics (a sects of Christianity) in the West, played an important role in the development of modern capitalism in America. This ethic was different from the Oriental religions and even the Catholic beliefs and emphasized upon a distinct economic behaviour.

Check Your Progress II

i) A) d)

   B) c)

ii) Buddhism was founded by Gautam Buddha during the 6th Century BC. He was born in a princely family of Sakya clan. This was a period of rapid urbanisation and presence of an extreme orthodox Hinduism. Buddhism came as a protest against caste, as well as, orthodox Hindu rituals.

Further Readings

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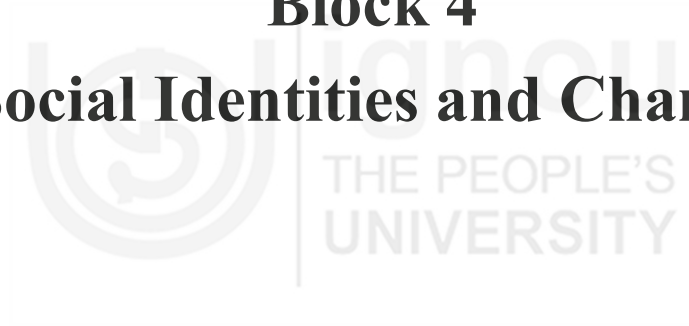
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Block 4
Social Identities and Change

BLOCK 4   INTRODUCTION

The fourth block, **Social Identities and Change** has three units. Each unit explains the major social identities on the basis of which society gets stratified and hierarchically arranged. Many of the social stigmas and exploitations occur due to low social status associated with some of these identities giving rise to social movements. So we have described the dalit social movements, tribal and ethnic movements, and gender based movements in India.

UNIT 8   DALIT MOVEMENTS*

Structure

8.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

* explain what is the meaning of "Dalit" and the Dalit movement;

* describe different stages and forms of Dalit movements in India;

* Identify the Dalit leaders and their contribution; and

* explain the structural and cultural reasons for Dalit uprising.

8.1   INTRODUCTION

In this Block 4: **Social Identities and Change**, Dalit Movements is the first unit. In the pervious section you had learnt about the social institutions like Family, Marriage and Kinship and Religion.

This unit informs you about Dalit movements in India. Do you know that Dalit movements, like any other movement are consciously organised and are a result of sustained collective efforts by ordinary citizens?

This unit attempts to introduce you to the meaning of Dalit movements by tracing its historical origins, its development from pre-independence period to post independence and its outcomes. It explains how Dalits and their struggles

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regarding social justice demand radical transformation and structural changes in our society. For this purpose the unit is divided into three segments.

The first takes you on a historical journey to make you understand the issues and causes of the Dalit uprising. It highlights the meaning of the term Dalit and the relevance of its usages when compared to other terms like 'harijan'.

The second segment is about the leaders who took up the causes and provided direction to the movement. The movements entered different phases under the leadership of these leaders.

Lastly, the segment will focus on the different aspects of the movements, its intellectual growth and changes in the foundation.

8.2   DALIT MOVEMENTS: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

In contemporary India, Dalits still bear the stigma of untouchability and continue to face dreadful socio-economic and cultural inequalities (Shah; 2004). Dalits are deprived of wealth, power and social acceptability or social status for generations. Do you know that the atrocities on Dalits involve more violent forms that are no less in intensity than those in the past despite the abolition of untouchability in free India? Dalit movements are strong resistances by both Dalits and non-Dalits to such atrocities. To begin with, Dalit movements are organised struggles against untouchability and social discrimination based on the practice of untouchability. The Dalit movements therefore challenged brahman hegemony and brahmanic traditions. To understand the Dalit uprising it is imperative to understand the term "Dalit".

8.2.1   The Term "Dalit"

In common parlance these days, Dalit is mostly confined to administratively coined term "Scheduled Castes" (SC), however; officially it includes scheduled tribes and other backward castes too. Britishers used SC for untouchables in 1935 and earlier Depressed Castes in 1919. Commonly Dalit is also used for all the marginalised sections of the society – poor landless peasants, women, tribals, workers and those exploited in the name of religion, politically, culturally and economically. Dalit means member of the lowest caste, the downtrodden and an erstwhile untouchable caste. Most importantly the term explains the process through which Dalits themselves recognised that they are discriminated and demanded separate identity of their own.

You will be surprised to know that Marathi writers proposed the term "Dalit" in 1960s in place of "Achhuta" or "Harijan" as it means broken/scattered in Marathi. Harijan term was coined by Mahatama Gandhi, which means 'children of God' as he appealed caste Hindus to change their attitude towards untouchables and use "Harijan" in place of 'antayaja'. Ambedkar used 'Pad Dalit', Bahishkrit, excluded caste and even depressed caste in place of untouchables but gradually moved to use the term Dalit. Harijan grew unpopular as it could not administer the change in attitude of the upper castes. Dalit word emerged as a marker of political identity and assertion when Dalit term got popularised and more used frequently.

Now it 'emphasizes the congruence between the backward castes and untouchables and focuses on the affinity in the experiences of these groups' (Bhattacharya, 1995).The term Dalit in past few decades have emerged as a powerful symbol of exploited masses who stood against the oppressive structures of upper caste hegemony and social discrimination. It signifies all those who were denied of any basic right of existence since time immemorial and those who fought to change the oppressive pasts and present. Looking at the trajectories of Dalit struggles for emancipation Anupama Rao (2009:23) rightly understands Dalit as 'political minority, negatively defined as non-Hindus in antagonistic relation to Hindu order' in our democratic nation.

Box 8.0: Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution of India has played important role in the overall upliftment of the Scheduled Castes. In Part IV of the Constitution, certain fundamental rights are guaranteed to the citizens. Article 15 (2) states that no citizens shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth be discriminated with regard to (a) access to shop, public restaurants, hotel and pubic entertainment; or (b) the use of wells, tank, bathing ghats, roads, and places of public resorts. Under Article 15 (4), the State is permitted to make any special provisions for advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.(Ref: IGNOU 2010, ESO-14, Society and Stratification, Block 6, pp. 8)

The terminology dalit characterises the essential argument of the Dalit movements in India, which is change and revolution. Section 8.4 will elaborate on various Dalit movements. Meanwhile we discuss the issues and causes below.

Check Your Progress I

i)   When was the term 'dalit' come in usage and for whom?

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8.2.2 Socio-Historical Background

Varna and Caste

Indian judiciary identified "caste atrocity" as crime to curb violence faced by Dalits in society and therefore clearly acknowledge that caste is central to Dalit's servitude and oppression. You know that our society is a stratified society based on hierarchy and difference (Gupta, 1991). The stratification on the basis of caste remains specific to Indian context giving rise to exploitation of the lower

castes.The relation between varna and caste according to Srinivas (1998:63) is 'that caste is subsumed under this traditional concept of varna'. Varna scheme has given distorted image of caste system where Brahmins are at the top and untouchables at the lowest. According to him such hierarchy has not been the only reality but later versions of varna scheme has established the supremacy of Brahmins.

Varna system is the hierarchical segmentation of society in four orders, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas and the rest were called Shudras and untouchables as 'Atishudra' who were outside the varna scheme. The segmental society is based on the myth established in the society that Brahmans emerged from the mouth, the Kshatriya from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs and Shudra from the feet of the Creator. Srinivas writes that groups such as Ayogaya, Chandala, Nishada and Paulkasa also were outside the Varna scheme.In this four-fold system first three are 'twice-born' that is men pass through Upanayana ceremony where sacred thread is donned to them. Whereas, Shudras and untouchables had no right to adorn the sacred thread. This distinction brings ritual superiority of other three varnas over Shudras and Ati-shudras. This ritual superiority is based on principles of Brahmanic Hindu religion (discussed below). Varna in Rig-Veda means colour and initially varna described just Aryas and Dasa that later became distinction between Aryas and Shudras.

Each varna subsumes large number of castes. Shudra category includes the largest number of non-brahmanical casts. Since the ritual considerations create these four orders, caste is seen as hierarchical system. Caste as an endogamous group based on the notion of purity and pollution that provides lowest status to shudra and atishudra and recognizes untouchability as a social practice. The caste atrocities are result of this order of hierarchy that has to be followed through differences in practices and religious rituals. Caste acquired political functions after constitutional provisions but the ritual aspect still remains the fundamental source of caste differentiation and hierarchy. It obtained new meaning in British India and with the rise of western liberalism and grew stronger as an institution defining identity and community in independent India too. Dalits were seen to escape caste atrocities through conversions and Sanskritisation. However Srinivas (1998;59) argues that the problem of untouchables remained different from the other lower castes as they could not take any advantage of westernisation or move up the ladder through Sanskritisation. The constitutional provisions brought changes in the status of untouchables in Independent India but caste atrocities continue giving rise to newer Dalit mobilisations.

8.2.3 The Social Practice of Untouchability

'Untouchability', is one of the aspects of Indian society that has obstructed the growth and development of our country. Most importantly it compromises the dignity of human beings and deny them of their basic rights. It is a practice that has its roots in the social values of a Hindu society based on varna and jati. Untouchability, in India has resulted in poverty, illiteracy, servitude and serious contempt and exploitation within the society. Based on birth, it is a practice that has oppressed many by keeping them outside the realm of caste hierarchy or at the lowest, confining them to restricted occupation and considering them impure. The impure occupations like, leather work, cleaning toilets and sewage tanks,

drains, disposing dead bodies, etc. are polluting in nature and those involved in such occupations are only certain sections of the population, known as untouchables.

The practice of untouchability therefore restricts the social mingling with other members of the society and the impurity is socially expressed through the touch that acts as a pollutant that defiles the members of higher caste group. The 'touch', the 'shadow', the 'skin' and even the 'voice' of the lower casts all constitute the sources of pollution and have the potential to pollute the upper castes. The punishment to defile the upper castes is severe and costs the lives on most occasions. Therefore they cannot move around freely, participate in social life, access places of worship, participate in festivals, fairs, community spaces, etc. You can very well guess then, that the practice exists since the system of 'chaturvarna' (four-fold system of varna) prevailed and persists due to existence of discriminatory caste system inherent in Hinduism. B.R. Ambedkar in 1948 defined it; "Untouchability is the notion of defilement, pollution, contamination and the ways and means of getting rid of that defilement. It is a case of permanent hereditary stain which nothing can cleanse."

8.2.4 Brahmanic Hinduism

The above two factors has its roots in Brahmanic traditions which acquired the form of hegemonic Hinduism since colonialism. The orthodoxy of brahmans and their domination grew as it drew their legitimacy from the constructed argument that Hinduism is the ancient religion of Hindus. Do you know that Brahmanic Hinduism rests on the authority of vedas and brahmans and consolidation of social order based on Manusmriti. The Bhagvadagita expounds that every system has to fulfill their duties as prescribed in the religious scriptures and only then salvation can be attained after death. This Karma theory flourished and Manusmriti, the law book of Hindus prescribed strict regulations regarding castes. It endorsed untouchability and the system was rigorously followed by the priestly castes. Such system designates highest rank to priestly caste as you have read above and strictly operates on the institution of caste and untouchability. The idea of 'pollution' attached to the caste provides the cultural identity to the higher castes in the order to differentiate them from the lower ones in the hierarchy. The ritual of purity emerges from the Brahmanic principle in which shudra, women and untouchables are all impure elements within the society and for purity of castes they have to be at the periphery of the social order and cannot share equality with other members of the society. The principle of ritual purity embedded in brahmanic practices led to the hegemony of the upper castes and the lower castes were denied of all the social rights. The temple entry was banned for the untouchables. The complete disempowerment of the lower castes and their servitude enhanced the dominant position of upper castes ritually in every respect. The higher positions in the caste ladder gave them religious legitimacy to exploit them in the name of ritual. Dalit movements therefore stood to reject the traditional Hindu social order based on untouchability promoting socio-economic inequality, cultural supremacy of brahmanic castes and discriminating religious beliefs.

8.2.5 Alternate Religious Movements

It is crucial to point out to you that throughout the Indian history as Srinivas (1998;64) writes, "attempts have been made to reject brahmaninical supremacy". The bhakti and devotional cults between 10th and 13th centuries rebelled against caste hierarchy and brahman domination, claiming devotion as the only way to salvation in place of caste. The bhakti cult saints rose against vedantic philosophy. The prominent saints were Meerabai, Chaitanya, Kabir, Tukaram, Vallabhacharya and others. There were untouchable saints like Ravidas, Chokhamela, Kanaka, Nandanara and others who were also part of Bhakti traditions. Temple entry to these untouchable saints was denied and therefore they continued their spiritual journey questioning brahmanic rituals. Bhakti Religious traditions like Sikhism, Budhism Veerasaivism also struggled against hierarchically stratified Hindu society where brahman or twice borns enjoyed the highest power. These movements provided philosophical basis and ways to fight dominant Hinduism for new generations. They laid the foundation for political aspirations, rights and complete abandoning of Hinduism.

8.3 SOCIAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

You must be aware that social reform movements during the colonial period were an awakening and struggle against the orthodox traditional socio-religious practices to reform the society. Educated men and women worked for women's education, widow remarriage, abolition of child marriage and practice of Sati, women's rights and freedom. Pandita Ramabai, Tarabai Shinde, Ram Mohan Roy and many others made contributions in reforming the society. These also led to the reform of the religious traditions and modern thinkers challenged dogmatism of Hindu religion. Modern Indian social thinkers, like Mahatama Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo, Dayananda Saraswati, rejected orthodox practices of Hindu religion and gave rise to new religious discourses. They believed caste and untouchability is not core to Hinduism.

8.3.1 Rise of Print and Public Spheres

The coming of the printing technology fostered a tool in the hands of Dalit leaders and activists. Education became the central concern of the activists and there was rise of Marathi Dalit public sphere in colonial India and later after independence. Pamphlets, books and other material were produced for mobilizations. Leaders like Jyotiba Phule, B.R Ambedkar wrote extensively. Gulamgiri, written in 1885 by Phule is one of his fundamental writings explaining his position on Aryans, Caste and Hinduism. Who were the Shudras? and The Untouchables were written by Ambedkar in his lifetime and later Revolution and Counter Revolution in Ancient India and other texts were published. Before Ambedkar G.B. Walangkar mobilized Dalits for human rights through news papers Dinbandhu and Sudharak. Tarabai Shinde in Satyashodhak Samaj wrote Stri-Purush Tulna (comparison of men and women), one of the foremost feminist documents in Marathi. Pandita Ramabai wrote in English on high caste women. On the other hand Bansode was an educator and journalist who was associated with non-Brahman movement. The rise of Marathi Dalit literature with writers like Om Prakash Valmiki and others gave rise to strong Cultural and literary traditions that shaped the movements in multiple ways.

Check Your Progress II

i)   Explain in one line the following:

a)   Caste

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b)   Untouchability

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c)   Social reform movement

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8.4   THE DALIT LEADERS AND THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF DALIT MOVEMENTS

Dalit movements in India saw different phases under the leadership of different leaders and different groups. Omvedt (1996:6) explains that beginning from Jyotiba Phule, the movement experienced consolidated struggle under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar and then the radical turn in the nature of movements took place with organisations such as Dalit Panthers, factionalised Republican party, Bahujan Samaj Party and some Naxilite groups of low castes. A brief sketch of the leaders, their period and associated groups will provide you an overview of the development of Dalit movements in India.

8.4.1   Jyotiba Phule and Dalit Reform Movement

Mahatama Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890) belonged to OBC caste Mali. Influenced by the wave of reform movements, he developed a strong resistance to upper caste oppression and worked amongst the poor, uneducated untouchables and women. He founded the Satyashodhak Samaj in 1875. He started by establishing schools for untouchable boys and girls in Pune where he belonged. As a social reformer he had a vision that if education is imparted to poor untouchables it

will propound rationality to fight the priestly caste. He saw education as a major source of social change and argued that knowledge, education and science are weapons of advancement in the hands of poor.He recognized that untouchables are more oppressed than lower castes but called for their unity as for him they together constituted the exploited masses of India. He felt it a necessity that shudras and Ati-shudra need to think on their own and to recognize caste as source of slavery.

Phule wrote about Aryans Conquest (Omvedt:1996). He writes about Aryans as cruel and violent invaders who upturned the egalitarian and prosperous society by deceit and violence and forged a mythology for a segmental and inequal society, not allowing access to its text. By bringing this critique he opposed brahmanical orthodoxy and upper caste dominance and led a strong anti-caste movements of non-brahman castes. Along with Savitribai, his wife he stood against brahmanic patriarchy by raising voices against brutal brahmanic practices meant for widows. The plight of widows was pitiable amongst the Brahmins and opening a house for widows and children, they attempted to humanize the society by struggling to challenge the tyranny of the Brahmins.

By 1920s and 1930s several mobilisations of peasants, dalits and women started to grow under varying leadership and ideologies. On Phule's formulation of Shudra and Ati-shudra, anti-caste, anti-brahman and anti-Hindu ideology stuggles started to grow by lower sections of the society. The non-brahman movement in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu as Omvedt (1996:35) explains, as well as the dalit movements in other states such as Punjab, Karnataka and UP, all highlighted Phule's ideology about Aryan conquest and brahman exploitation on the basis of religion. The Adi traditions, claiming lineage to non-Aryans began to take place at several places. Kisan Faguji Bansode (1870-1946) was one of the prominent leader of Adi-movement in Maharashtra. Therefore by 1920s the new dalit movement emerged out of non-brahman struggles that claimed non-Aryans as original inhabitants and refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Brahmanic traditions. These Dalit movements were Ad-dharm in Punjab, Adi Hindu in U.P. and Hyderabad, Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra, Adi Karnataka. Therefore Phule developed a universalistic ideology to counter the wave of Hinduism that was also at its peak in the given period.

Box 8.1: Jyotiba Phule

The non-Brahmanical movement was accorded institutionalisation in the programmes of the Satya Shodhak Samaj founded by Phule. He considered Brahmisim as cunning and self-seeking and condemned it as intolerable imposition to ensure the perpetuation of the high in the caste hierarchy. The "dominant agricultural castes" that formed the core and support of this movement subsequently ushered were very pro Congress. Phule's interpretation of lower caste exploitation ignored the economic and political contexts. Exploitation was interpreted in terms of culture and ethnicity. Phule however stressed the need for return to pre-Brahmin religious tradition. Organisation and education were considered essential for attainment of such goals. He opposed the exploitation of Indian peasants and wage earners. (Ref: IGNOU 2010; ESO-14 Society and Stratification, Block 6, pp.14)

8.4.2 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and the Movement

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) arose as a Dalit leader on the foundations of non-Brahman movement. Dalit movements saw second phase under him since Ambedkar insisted on safeguarding the political rights of Dalits. He demanded separate electorate for the untouchables and not just the place in the Hindu social order (Singh;1995:115). In 1932, in Poona pact he demanded reserved constituencies for Dalits. Singh points towards two shifts in Dalit politics under Ambedkar in the period 1930-56. It was inclined towards equal political rights and complete abolition of caste system. Beginning of the independent Dalit movement can be traced when Ambedkar formed Indian Labour Part in 1936.

Ambedkar received a US degree in law and returned to India. He resigned from his state service in Baroda and began as a professor at Sydenham College in Bombay. It is here that he associated with Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur and began his journey to fight for the complete autonomy of Dalits. Ambedkar entered into politics with Mahars, forming Bahiskrut Hitkarni Sabha that soon started to hold conferences in and around the province. The first Dalit liberation movement, Mahad Satyagrah was an outcome of one of the conferences. The decision to drink water from the town tank resulted in the failed attempt but the message against Brahmanic suppression was loud and clear as they burnt the copies of Manusmriti. Ambedkar emerged as the most powerful leader with the growing atmosphere of radical opposition to congress bourgeois and resentment of peasants, workers and other marginalized sections. Ambedkar sharpened his struggles against upper castes by strongly proposing the unity of workers, peasants, dalits, non-brahmans and political alliance with non-congress parties. For Ambedkar, not only Brahmanism but capitalism and landlordism were also enemies of people and he believed that not just the social but economic liberation of Dalits is also mandatory for their improved social status in society.

Ambedkar wrote extensively and adopted socialist framework and believed in state guided industrial development. He was against the non-Aryan identity claims and believed caste system came much later. Ambedkar called for mass conversion to Buddhism because Hinduism is based on caste ideology and therefore represents inequality and inegalitarianism. Nearly a million people converted to Buddhism in Nagpur. He rejected Manusmriti and embraced Buddhism as a religion of equality and rationality devoid of any oppression towards poor and women. Renunciation of Hindu religion was the only source of Dalit identity and liberation. He made a united front called Republican party that worked along Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti. He called for ideological, cultural and political struggle for transformation in social order.

8.4.3 Periyar and Mass Movement

The non-brahman movement in Tamil Nadu led to the rise of E.V. Ramaswamy, Periyar (1879-1973), who belonged to merchant family in Erode. Like Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule there were others such as Ramasamy Naicker in Tamil Nadu and in Kerala there was Dalit movement known as Shri Narayana Dharam Paripalana Movement or SNDP Movement. He left Congress by 1925. When Mahatama Gandhi defended Varnashram dharma he contested it strongly and declared that if India has to gain freedom, it has to dissolve Congress, Hindu religion and Brahman domination (omvedt:55). Similar to Phule's Satyashodhak Samaj, Periyar formed the Self Respect League in 1926, that professed radical

nationalism and stood fiercely against caste and religion. Periyar's radicalism, anti-caste and anti-religion views were expressed in his radical speeches giving new orientation to the non-brahman-movement.

8.4.4 Other Movements

After Ambedkar several movements arose under the banner of different parties. A radical turn was experienced by coming of the Dalit Panthers who fought in collaboration with all parties that were committed to decimate caste and class politics in the country. It was a militant organisation of Dalit Youths that was born in Bombay in 1972. They claimed that the entire state machinery in post independent India was dominated by feudal ideology and interests and such ideologies based on religion have deprived Dalits of their rights as individuals and power, wealth and status within the society. Alligned with several voices across the country that arose against corruption, poverty, state domination, marginalisation of weaker sections, Dalit Panthers gave new direction to Dalit movements by widening its horizon. It sparked the wave of protest and organised efforts against Brahmans that resulted into formation of Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, with its branches all across the country. Gradually Ambedkarite organisations started to spring up in Tamil Nadu and by 1984 Dalit Mahasabha was formed. In the same year Kanshi Ram formed his party on Ambedkar's birthday, known as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) that aimed to work amongst Dalits, adivasis and OBCs and minorities. Bhartiya Republic Party remained committed to Mahars and Dalits at large.

Check Your Progress III

i)   Which leader started Satyashodhak Samaj?

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ii)   Who were Dalit Panthers?

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iii)   Who was Jyotiba Phule?

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8.5   A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF DALIT MOVEMENTS

Dalit movements are markers of Dalit consciousness about the realisation of them as any other human beings with definite needs and mental and physical capabilities like others. It made them assert their identities, culture and politics without any restrictions and infringement. This shaped the movements against caste based social exclusion of both reformative and transformative character. The case of Dalit movement rests on the dream of a modern caste-free egalitarian Indian society where no discrimination exists on the basis of caste.

Typologies

Dalit movements have seen different phases and encountered challenges both cultural as well as political. It fought for human dignity and recognition of large section of masses that remain invisible in society since ages. Therefore Omvedt argues that it was "redemptive for individuals and revolutionary in terms of society". The struggle has always been radical in its orientations and demands change in individual psyche as well as the entire society for dalit emancipation and dignity.

Shah (2004) on the other hand argues that these movements were both reformative and alternative in nature since it demanded altered socio-cultural and religious conditions while asking freedom from bondage and servitude. He further indicates that reformative can be classified into Bhakti, neo-vedantik and Sanskritisation movements whereas, the alternative spread in conversions, religious and secular movements.

Beyond Hinduism

The movement operated at two levels: first under Phule it took the path of social reform and demanded social acceptability of shudra and atishudra by the removal of the practice of untouchability and claiming the membership within the society. It aimed to reform the society on the principles of liberty, justice freedom and brotherhood. In the second phase with demand for political as well as social, integration took the centre stage. The movement demanded constitutional guarantee and recognition of a separate identity as Dalits. Dalit Panthers and many others brought Dalit movements into the sphere of larger struggles against poverty, equal rights, employment and sharing of resources with Dalits. The mass conversion indicated for collective emancipation as Shah(2001;34) writes, that 'throughout 1970s it the protests and struggles on issues of land rights, temple entry, farm wages, common resources for all, against discrimination in public spaces, etc. continued at local levels that reflected in electoral dignity'.

Scholars like Rajni Kothari have argued that Dalit movements were not just anti-untouchability or anti-brahman movements but had vast canavas demanding right to education, employment and political representation. Omvedt (1996;92) highlights that they demanded for democratic socialism based on equality, freedom and justice. Dalit politics moved beyond Hinduism or the cultural rights of Dalits and demanded for broad economic and political integration of the masses.

Mandal Commission brought different dimension to the Dalit Bahujan confederation. Later parties brought Dalits into mainstream politics of parliamentarian system. Gopal Guru states, that at present Dalit politics has reduced the movements to pressure groups that is restricted to micro levels. Dalits

achieved national status and have shown profound transformation in literacy reaching to 66.10% in 2011. Government further bans social discrimination in various local bodies. Yet what is challenging is the violence on political mobilisations of Dalits. Una case in Gujrat, 2016 and discrimination at the individual level Rohit Vemulla suicide case, also January 2016 are still throwing up blatant challenges to the struggles of Dalits for cultural and social equality. The hegemonic upper caste Hindu dominated society is still averse to the inclusion of lower castes and untouchables.

8.6   LET US SUM UP

The unit focuses on Dalit movements in India. It presents the meanings of the term Dalit, the causes and issues that shape the movement and most significantly its leaders.

The different phases of Dalit movement can be associated with prominent leaders and the issues they raised for the liberation and emancipation of Dalits. The movements express the struggle against the exploitation and oppression of the lower castes and untouchables in society.

The unfolding of the Dalit movement also explains us that the term Dalit encompasses all poor, marginalised and downtrodden section of the society and the effort was for workers, peasants, landless labourers, women, religious minorities as a whole. The movements had the power to create an alternative India with more egalitarian, just and vibrant society free from regressive values and helps.

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8.8   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

The term "Dalit" is used administratively for the lowest castes called the scheduled castes or SC's however, officially it also includes the scheduled tribes i.e. the ST's and the Other Backward Castes or OBC's. Britishers used the term Scheduled Castes or SC's for untouchables in 1935 and earlier Depressed castes in 1919. This term and the term 'dalit' continued to be used for all marginalised sections of society, such as the poor peasants, women, workers etc. the Marathi writers first proposed this term in 1960's in place of the term "Achuta".

Check Your Progress II

a)   Caste is an endogamous group, dividing the society into different hierarchical groups.

b)   Untouchability which has been abolished by the Constitution of India is a social practice that had ensured discrimination and exploitation towards the lower castes by upper castes.

c)   Reform movements are movements that aim to reform the society from the evil religious practices, beliefs and rituals.

Check Your Progress III

a)   B.R. Ambedkar

b)   The group of young Dalits from Maharashtra

c)   A social reformer and a Dalit leader.

UNIT 9   GENDER BASED MOVEMENT*

Structure

9.0   OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the key sociological concepts of sex and gender;

- discuss how gender roles are socially constructed in society;

- describe how this gender construction gives rise to different roles and status in society; especially women's status;

- outline the women's movement in India;

- discuss the growth and maturing of the movement;

- discuss nature of labour force, and its types;

- describe the LGBT Queer Movement in India; and

- discuss the challenges to the women's movement.

9.1   INTRODUCTION

In the pervious unit you had learnt about Dalit movements in India. Here the focus of the unit is on the role and status of men and women and the other gender issues which have given rise to gender based movements.

In this unit, we shall look into the issue on Gender based movements in India. We will first explains the key sociological concepts related with the gender issues in brief. We will then highlight the concern raised by various women's organisations that spark off in the form of different social movements. This covers

the period from early feminist campaigns to the maturing of the movement. We have briefly presented the LGBT and Queer movement in this unit to explain gender related movements in India. Finally we discuss the challenges to women's movement in India.

9.2 EXAMINING SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

In this section we shall be examining the concepts of sex and gender, role and status and the traditional view on women's role and status. This is because many of the gender issues are related with the low status of women and other psychological biases in society,

9.2.1 Sex and Gender

The dictionary meaning of gender is "classification of objects roughly corresponding to the two sexes" as well as the properties of these two sexes. While discussing the differences between the sexes we generally focus on biological and reproductive functions, but differences in gender relate to various other attributes, which may be socially and culturally determined. In other words sex is biological whereas gender is sociological, namely, the social meaning we attribute to it. Over here we shall be looking mainly at some of these attributes and how they come into existence. Further, we shall be looking at how the concepts of 'woman' and 'man' become important not only in terms of the difference between them, but also as concepts which help us to understand society and social relationships.

9.2.2 Role and Status

You are already aware of or will now realise the vital importance of the terms such as role, status and function for an understanding of society. These terms tell us how individuals and groups organise themselves as well as relate to each other. Very simply, role tells us about what is expected from an individual in a particular situation, while status deals with her or his expectations arising out of that situation. To put it another way, a role deals with duties and obligations while status deals with rights (but not necessarily legal rights). You will, of course, realise that these definitions or explanations are very simply put and may in fact overlook many complexities and even conflicts. For instance, it is commonly assumed that a mother is a woman, a wife, a cook, a teacher of her children, a daughter-in-law and so on. What happens when the mother is also the principal of the local village school? Not only does she have to deal with a range of roles and statuses, but also with the tensions that may arise out of her role as mother and her role as an administrator. We shall try and show you how conventional analyses have tended to concentrate on the traditional and accepted roles of women as bearers and rearers of children and not on their other roles. So far, biological differences have been focused on without adequate attention to the implications of these differences.

9.2.3 Traditional Expectations and Women's Role and Status

As a girl or boy living in contemporary India, you would have heard of, or even been witness to, caste and religious conflicts and wondered how these conflicts arise. In many cases they occur because of differences in expectations. You would perhaps also have heard of how a certain caste or community oppresses or ill-

treats members of other castes and communities. Such matters are now routinely discussed in the school, within the home and among the friends. Occasionally there may also be cases of men of one group or caste molesting or raping women of another group or caste. Such matters are also discussed, but perhaps less freely. Caste oppression is a recognised expression of power and control of one group over another. You are probably now quite confused by the manner in which terms, such as 'keeping people in their place', 'honour', 'conflict', 'power' and so on have been used. To make it simpler we are now suggesting that it is essential for us to take into consideration how the various roles and expectations of social groups may compete with one another. By giving you above the random examples of the tensions experienced by women from a group caught up in conflict situations we wanted to make you aware of the fact that a study of Indian society needs to take into consideration the role of gender to understand the concepts of role, status, and conflict. You will also be able to understand social movements related with gender issues such as; women's movements and other kinds of gender based movements in India. (Ref. IGNOU 2001, ESO-12: Society in India, Block 7)

Activity 1

Observe the daily activities of two employed women preferably from different socio-economic backgrounds, continuously for one week. While observing please note the types of work done by them inside the house and, if possible, at the work place. Now, write an essay in about 20 lines on the double burden of work regularly undertaken by them. Exchange your note, if possible, with your co-learners at your Study Centre.

9.3 WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN INDIA: THE CONTEXT

Desai, N. in her work, *From accommodation to articulation: Women's movement in India* critically examines the disturbing aspect of the social situation in India which is in fact the slow erosion of concern for women's issues even after Independence. She argues that in the decades preceding the attainment of national independence, prior to 1947, there was an outstanding record of women's participation in political struggle and through it of articulating their rights. Yet, until the early seventies there has been no concerted action towards achieving the goal of equality.

The **dawn of independence in 1947** generated a great deal of hope and optimism in the people. The early fifties saw the enactment of several legislations which established formal equality, removed social disabilities, setting up various administrative bodies for the creation of opportunities for women, and inducting a number of feminists into the government. Another important factor which affected the contours of women's movement was the emergence of new welfare society, in **1953** the **Government established a Central Social Welfare Board** in which many of the prominent women social workers were associated with it. Several voluntary organisation and women's association began to rely on the grants received from the board. As a result they lost their spirit and vigour of the pre-independence phase. Thus no effort was made to increase the earning power of women.

Women's development was thought to be confined to education, social welfare, and health by the Planning Commission. Besides in every plan the proportionate allocation for social services was declining which was subjected to heavy cuts in times of crisis. The order of priorities up to the Fourth Plan has been education, then health and social welfare because it was generally assumed that all other programmes will benefit women directly or indirectly.

Kumar, R (1995) argued that the movement that started in the 1970s was different from its predecessors, for it grew out of a number of radical movements of the time. The most interesting movements for feminists were the *Shahada* and **anti-price rise agitations** in **Maharashtra** and the **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** and *Nav Nirman* **in Gujarat**. The **Shahada movement**, in **Dhulia district of Maharashtra**, was started by a Bhil tribal landless landowners. Drought and famine in Maharashtra during this period exacerbated the poverty already created by invidious rates of sharecropping, land alienation, and extortionate money lending charges, and these conditions contributed to rising militancy among the Bhils. The **Shahada movement began as a folk protest** (through radical **devotional song clubs**) in the late 1960s. It took on a more militant campaigning thrust when the New Left joined the movement in the early 1970s and helped the Bhils form an organization, the *Shramik Sangathana,* **in 1972.** Accounts of the Shahada movement women were more active than men and that as their militancy grew, they began to take direct action on issues specific to them as women, such as the **physical violence associated with alcoholism**. Groups of women began to go from village to village to storm liquor dens and destroy liquor pots. Women would assemble, beat him, and force him to apologize to his wife in public.

Meanwhile in Gujarat, what was probably the first attempt at forming a women's trade union was made in Ahmedabad by Gandhian socialists attached to the **Textile Labour Association (TLA). Formed in 1972** at the initiative of **Ela Bhatt,** who worked in the women's wing of the TLA, the **Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)** was an organization of women who worked in different trades in the informal sector but shared a common experience of extremely low earnings, very poor working conditions (most of them performed piecework in their homes or toiled on the streets as vendors or hawkers), harassment from those in authority (the contractor for home workers and the police for vendors), and lack of recognition of their work as socially useful labour.

Conditions of **drought and famine** in the rural areas of **Maharashtra in the early 1970s** led to a **sharp rise in prices** in the urban areas. **In 1973, Mrinal Gore of** the **Socialist Party** and **Ahilya Ranganekar of the Communist Party of India – Marxist (CPI –M)**, together with many others, formed the united **Women's Anti Price Rise Front**, to mobilize women of the city against inflation. The campaign rapidly became a mass women's movement for consumer protection and its members demanded that the government fix prices and distribute essential commodities.

Soon after, the movement spread to Gujarat, where it was known as the *Nav Nirman* **Movement of 1974.** *Nav Nirman,* originally a students' movement against soaring prices, corruption, and black marketeering, became a massive middle-class movement joined by thousands of women. It took the police some

three months to subdue the *Nav Nirman* movement, and between ninety and one hundred people were killed.

In the same year as the *Nav Nirman* **movement** developed and was subdued, the **first women's group** associated with the contemporary feminist movement was **formed in Hyderabad**. Comprising women from the Maoist movement , the **Progressive Organization of Women (POW)** exemplified rethinking within the Left. As in the *Shahada* movement, Maoist women stressed the existence of gender oppression and to organize women against it.

The **year 1975** saw the sudden development of a whole spate of feminist activities in **Maharashtra.** Influenced by POW, **Maoist women in Pune** formed the **Purogami Stree Sangathana** (Progressive Women's Organization), and Maoist women in Bombay formed **the Stree Mukti Sangathana (Womens' Liberation Organization). March 8, International Women's Day,** was celebrated for the first time in India by both party-based and autonomous organizations in Maharashtra: the **Lal Nishan (Red Flag) Party** commemorated it with a special issue of the party paper. In August, the **Marathi socialist magazine** *Sadhana* brought out a special women's issue; in September *dalits* and socialists organized a conference of *devadasis* (literally, servants of the gods; or temple prostitutes); and in October a number of organizations that had developed out of the Maoist movement, such as the *Lal Nishan Party* and the **Shramik Sangathana**, organized a '**United Women's Liberation Struggle'** conference in Pune.

In the late nineteenth century, under the leadership of **Jyotiba Phule** dalits had also espoused **women's rights to education**, against *purdah*, and for widow remarriage, *Janwedana a* dalit Marathi newspaper, brought out a special women's issue entitled 'In the Third World Women Hold Up Half the Sky,' a slogan borrowed from the Chinese Revolution to make clear its departure from First World Feminism ; some months later women from the dalits movement formed an intriguing new group called the *Mahila Samta Sainik Dal* (League of Women Soldiers for Equality).

Activity 2

Interview five women, preferably from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Inquire from them about the form and extent of the ownership they have on land, household assets and other productive resources. Now based on your data write a note on women's access to property in about 20 lines. Exchange your note, if possible, with your co-learners at the Study Centre.

The declaration of a **state of emergency in 1975 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi** interrupted the development of the fledgling women's movement. Many political organisations were driven underground, thousands of activists were arrested, and most who remained at liberty focused on civil rights, such as freedom of speech and association, the right to protest, and the rights of political prisoners. The Lifting of the emergency in 1977 and the formation of the *Janata government in 1978* led to a renewal of some of the earlier movements. Women's groups were formed all over the country but mainly in the major cities.

9.3.1 Early Feminist Campaigns

The distinguishing features of the new women's groups were that they declared themselves to be 'feminist' despite the fact that most of their members were

drawn from the Left, which saw feminism as bourgeois i.e. belonging to middle and upper middle classes and divisive: that they insisted on being autonomous even though most of their members were affiliated to other political groups, generally of the far Left; and that they rapidly built networks among, one another, ideological differences notwithstanding. All three features were, however, defined and in certain ways limited by the history of these groups, whose first years were spent mainly in attempts at self-definition. The fact that most of their members were drawn from the far Left and belonged to the urban educated middle class influenced the feminist movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s in complex and varied ways.

The only party-based women's organisation to be formed in the late **1970s** was the *Mahila Dakshata Samiti* (Women's Self- Development Organization), which was founded in 1977 by socialist women in the coalition Janata Party. Some feminists were critical of party practices but believed that parties could enact valuable reform and fulfill feminist aims, others were critical of entrenched political parties, and yet others argued that political parties, even of the Left, were so centralised that they would never fulfill the feminist. Though the feminist campaigns in the late 1970s and early 1980s were dominated by the new city-based groups, a similar growth of feminist consciousness had taken place in certain rural movements. The 1950s sharecroppers' movement in the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh was again renewed in the late 1970s, and the area was declared a 'disturbed zone' by the government. In **Telengana's Karimnagar district**, where women had been especially active in the **landless labourers' movemen**t from the 1960s on, the new wave of agitation began with a campaign against the **kidnapping of a woman called Devamma,** and the **murder of her husband, by a local landlord.** According to the *Stree Shakti Sanghatana* formed in the late **1970s** in Hyderabad, the demand for **independent women's organizations** came from the women themselves, who **raised the issues of wife beating** and **landlord rape** through the *mahila sanghams* (women's committees).

At around the same time, in the **Bodhgaya district of Bihar** feminist issues were raised by women in the socialist students' organisation, the *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini* (Young Students' Struggle Organisation), which was involved in an **agricultural laborers' movement** for land reclamation from the temple priest who owned most of the land in the area. As in the Shahada and Telengana Movement, women were active in the struggle, and in 1979 a women's camp in Bodhgaya decided that Vahini campaigns to reclaim plots of land would demand that plots be registered in the names of men and women.

9.3.2 The Movement Against Dowry

The **first campaigns** of the contemporary Indian feminist movement were **against dowry** and **rape.** Protests against dowry were first organized by the **Progressive Organization of Women (POW)** in **Hyderabad in 1975**. Although some of the demonstrations numbered as many as two thousand people, the protests did not grow into a full-fledged campaign because of the imposition of the emergency, which drove most activists underground. After the lifting of the emergency, **a new movement against dowry started in Delhi**. This time it was against **violence inflicted upon women for dowries**, especially against murder and abetment to suicide.

Although the *Mahila Dakshata Samiti* was the **first women's organization in Delhi's** contemporary feminist movement to take up the issue of **dowry and dowry harassment**, it was *Stri Sangharsh*, a fledgling feminist group founded in 1979, that drew public attention to dowry-related crimes. On 1st June 1979, that drew public organized a demonstration against the death of Tarvinder Kaur, a young woman from Delhi who had left a deathbed statement saying the in-laws had killed her because her parents could not fulfill the in-laws' ever-increasing demands. The demonstration was widely reported by the national press, and in the next few weeks there was a spate of **demonstrations against dowry deaths**, one of the biggest ones **led by the *Nari Raksha Samiti* (**Women's Rescue Committee) on 12th June through the alleys of old Delhi.

Within weeks, feminists reversed the indifference of decades' issue of linking women's death by fire (women doused with kerosene and set on fire, often by the in-laws and husband) with **dowry harassment** and showing that many official suicides were in fact murders. Feminists recorded the last words of the dying woman, took family testimony, and encouraged friends and neighbors to come forward with their evidence. As a result, many families began to lodge complaints with the police against the harassment of their daughters by the in-laws for more dowry. Campaigns against dowry deaths gradually began to be taken up by neighborhood groups, teachers' associations, and trade unions.

In 1980, a year after the anti-dowry agitation began; the **government passed a law against dowry-related crimes** that recognized abetment to suicide because of dowry demands as a special crime and made mandatory a police investigation into the death, of any woman within five years of marriage. And though the law was passed in 1980, the first positive judgment under it did not occur until **1982,** when a **Delhi Sessions Court magistrate found two people guilty of dowry murder and sentenced them to death.** The judgment was **reversed by the Delhi High Court in early 1983**. Women's groups from the party-affiliated Left and autonomous groups protested and were held for contempt of court. In 1985, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict but converted the sentences to life imprisonment. Moreover, the storm that women's groups raised in 1983 had some indirect effect. In **December 1983 the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act was passed,** which made cruelty to a wife a cognizable, non-bailable offence punishable by up to three years' imprisonment and fine; the act also redefined cruelty to include mental as well as physical harassment. In addition, **Section 113-A of the Evidence Act** was amended so that the court could draw an inference of abetment to suicide. Finally, the act amended **Section 174 of the Criminal Procedure Code**, requiring a postmortem examination of the body of a woman who died within seven years of marriage.

9.3.3 The Agitation Against Rape

Few months after the campaign against dowry- related crimes began, the agitation against rape started with **campaigns against police rape**.

When the **new feminist groups** were **formed in the late 1970s** they were already familiar with the categories of police and landlord rape, for both, especially the former, had been addressed by the Maoist movement. Moreover, the **issue of police rape achieved new significance in 1978,** just as feminist groups were in the process of formation, through an **incident in Hyderabad** where a woman called **Rameeza Bee was raped by several policemen**, and **her husband, a**

rickshaw puller, was murdered when he protested his wife's rape. A popular uprising ensued: Twenty-two thousand people went to set up roadblocks, cut the telephone wires, stoned the building, and set fire to some bicycles in the compound. The army had to be called in, and the uprising was quieted only after the state government had been dismissed and a commission of inquiry into the rape and the murder had been appointed.

In 1979, there were women's demonstrations against incidents of police and landlord employer rape in many parts of the country. Campaigns against these incidents, however remained isolated from each other until **1980**, when an open letter by four senior lawyers against a judgment in a case of **police rape in Maharashtra sparked off a campaign by feminist groups.** Known as the **Mathura rape case,** the incident had occurred several years earlier, when a **seventeen year old girl**, **Mathura, was raped by local policemen**. A case was registered against the policemen, who were acquitted at the Sessions Court, convicted on appeal at the High Court, convicted on appeal at the High Court, and later acquitted by the Supreme Court. The defense argument for the policemen was that Mathura had a boyfriend and was thus a loose woman who could not by definition be raped. The open letter was in protest at the Supreme Court's acceptance of this argument.

The **campaign against rape (begun in 1978-79) marked a new stage in the development of feminism in India**. The Bombay feminist group **Forum Against Rape (FAR)**, which is now called the **Forum Against Oppression of Women** decided in February 1980 to campaign for the reopening of the case and wrote to feminist groups across the country to propose that demonstrations be held on **International Women's Day (8th March)** to demand a retrial. In effect, this was the **first time that feminist groups coordinated a national campaign**. Groups in seven cities responded to the **FAR letter** and **organized demonstrations on 8th March demanding a retrial of the Mathura case,** the implementation of relevant sections of the **Indian Penal Code,** and **changes in the rape law**. In both Bombay and Delhi, joint action committees were formed of feminist groups and Socialist and Communist Party affiliates to coordinate the campaign.

Meanwhile, protests against police rape were reported from all over the country, only some of which were organised by feminists. As in the agitation against dowry, the first protests against police rape sparked off a series of protests by neighbourhood and trade union-based groups in different parts of the country.

Within months of the agitation, the government introduced a bill defining the categories of custodial rape and specifying a mandatory punishment of ten years' imprisonment, in camera trials, and shift of the onus of proof onto the accused. The clause over which controversy raged was the burden of proof clause, which said that if the women could prove intercourse with the accused at the time and place she alleged, and if it had been forced upon her, then the accused would be presumed guilty until he could prove otherwise. Immediately there arose the cry that this violated the legal principle that a man was innocent until proved guilty , and the papers were full of articles vehemently protesting the clause, some of which exclaimed that this paved the way for every revengeful woman to frame innocent men, Indeed, **a 1988** Supreme Court judgment in another case of custodial rape, the **Suman Rani case**, showed how clauses in the law that were intended to ensure fairness allowed scope for interpretations that ran contrary to

the purpose of the law. The sentence against Suman Rani's rapists was reduced because of the supposed conduct of the victim – in this case the fact that she had a lover was held to militate against the crime of the rapist. This issue of conduct was especially important given the circumstances under which much urban custodial rape take place. In Delhi, for example, the **People's Union of Democratic Rights**, discovered that in several cases the victims had run away from home with the men they loved against their families' wishes; then the police had tracked them down in cities to which they had fled and used their 'runaway' status as a reason to separate them from their partners and rape them.

The **Supreme Court Judgment** was a **staggering setback** for the **feminist movement,** which **in 1980** had appeared to have at least partially gained its point that character and conduct should be deemed irrelevant. Feminists reacted with a storm of protest. The National Front government responded promptly with the promise of yet another amendment of the rape law, this time concerning the rules of evidence. But the key question, of implementation and interpretation of the law, remained open.

Check Your Progress I

i)   Distinguish between gender and sex.

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ii) Tick the true answer (T) and (F) for false

a)   In pre-Independent India there was no attempt to attain gender equality in India.

b)   The Shahada Movement in India, district of Maharashtra was started by Bhil tribal landless landowners.

c)   The year 1975 saw a development of a number of feminist activities in Maharashtra.

d)   In 1988 Supreme Court judgement on custodial rape, the Suman Rani case, the custodial laws showed fairness to the victim.

iii) What are the major reasons for the protest and uprising of women in India?

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9.4 GROWTH AND MATURING OF THE MOVEMENT

The mixed experiences of the campaigns against rape and dowry led many feminists to question their methods and tactics. The discovery that there was little and faulty connection between the enactment and the implementation of laws left many feeling rather bitter that the government had easily side tracked their demands by enacting legislation. This gave rise to further questions about the efficacy of basing campaigns around demands for changes in the law and, by extension, around demands for action from the state. In the early 1980s, women's centers were formed in several cities to provide women with legal aid, counseling, health care and employment. Attempts to appropriate symbols of women's power grew in the 1980s through reinterpreting myths, epics, and folktales and unearthing historical forms of women's resistance in India. The emphasis gradually changed to looking for traditional sources of women's strength rather than simply suffering.

The search for historical examples of women's resistance led feminists to scrutinize the distant and immediate past, to look at the role women played in broader movements for social transformation, and to reclaim some of the movement's predating contemporary feminism. One example was the *Chipko movement* against **deforestation** in the northern Indian mountain tracts, beginning in the mid-1970s, *Chipko* (literally, 'cling to') was a **movement to prevent forest destruction** by timber contractors and was carried forward largely by women, who were traditionally responsible for fuel, food and water in the family.

By the early **1980s, feminism had branched into a series of activities** ranging from the **production of literature and audiovisual material to slum-improvement work,** employment-generating schemes, health education, and trade unions. The **first professions** to feel the influence of feminism were **journalism, academia, and medicine**. Soon after the feminist movement began, most of the major **English-language dailies** had deputed one or more women journalists to write **exclusively on feminist issues**, and a network of women journalists evolved.

Women's studies took off in the 1980s, initially under the aegis of independent research institutes such as the **Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) in Delhi**, though an attempt to fund research at the university level was made by the S.N Damodar Thackeray (SNDT) Women's University in Bombay, which set up a women's research unit. The SNDT and CWDS began to jointly host annual national women's studies conferences, and interest in women's studies grew so rapidly that today the University Grants Commission, a central government body plans to set up Women's studies courses at the college level.

During the same period, the Maharashtra-based Shiv Sena (Shiva's Army) activated its women's wing to engage in anti-Muslim propaganda. Interestingly, its main argument was one advanced in the nineteenth century that had enduring success in India; that the Muslim rate of reproduction is so prolific that it will outstrip that of Hindus.

An even more worrying development took place between 1982 and 1983 in Delhi; Rajasthan and parts of Bengal, where attempts were made to revive *sati,*

the practice of immolating windows on their husbands' funeral pyres. Under the aegis of the ***Rani Sati Sarva Sangh*** (an organization to promote sati) feminist discourse was used to propagate a cult of widow immolation.

Women's demonstrations were organized in various parts of the country to **demand women's 'right' to commit sati.** In Delhi, feminists decided to hold a counter demonstration along the route of a pro-sati procession. This was the first time that feminists were forced to confront a group of hostile women, which was in itself so shocking that it took the heart out of the counter demonstration. Most distressing of all, however, was the way in which the processionists appropriated the language of rights, stating that they should have the right, as Hindus and as women, to commit, worship and propagate sati. At the same time, they also appropriated feminist slogans on women's militancy, for example, *'Hum Bharat ki nari hain, phool nahin, chingari hain* (We, the women of India, are not flowers but fiery sparks).

The early 1980s witnesses a series of **counter movements against feminist ideas** by sections of **traditionalist society**. The rise of these counter movements was partly related to the spread of feminism and the influence it was beginning to have on women's attitudes, especially within the family. The kind of support that women's centre's gave women who were being harassed for dowry or forced into arranged marriages, for example, provoked a considerable degree of public and private hostility, and feminists began to face attacks from irate families in person and through the police and the courts. However, where earlier such attacks would have led to a wave of sympathy for the feminists, from the mid-1980s on they were accompanied by a public and increasingly sophisticated, critique of feminism. Much of this criticism took place in a context of growing communalism.

9.5   L.G.B.T+Q MOVEMENT

When we talk about gender based movements, we must also add other gender related developments in society especially in India. There has been different sexualities besides male and female and traditional ambiguity and vagueness about them L.G.B.T is the code word which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender. This community has originally been known as Gay community. But it was not enough to use this term since it referred only to men. Hence, the term L.G.B.T was introduced in the mid-1980s. These people have a different sexual orientation than a normal person. Their orientations regarding sexual life, self-identification, sexual behavior is different.

Gay people were traditionally understood to be attracted to the people of same gender and were in relationship with the same gender. But the lesbians, biosexuals and transgender were not included in this.

A lesbian generally refers to women who are sexually attracted to women only. They are like gay people but only men are included in gay whereas women are called lesbians. They are not at all attracted to opposite genders.

A bisexual person is one who is sexual, romantically and emotionally attracted to both the sexes. They are not only attracted to one but finds a connection in both the genders.

The LGBT and Queer face innumerable difficulties in the society where the only accepted orientation is heterosexuality. Homosexuality is regarded as abnormal. Abuse is their daily routine and they faced it almost every day. They are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and threat of violence due to their sexual orientation than those that identify themselves as heterosexual. It is mainly due to homophobia. They face inequality and violence at every place around the world. They face torture from people who mock at them and make them realize that they are different from others. In many countries, the rights enjoyed by opposite-sex couples are not enjoyed by the same-sex couples. They are prohibited from those rights. As a result, they face discrimination and cannot enjoy social protection schemes such as, health care .(Das Ananya International Journal for Emerging Research & Development © 2018, www.IJERND.com All Rights Reserved Page |11 pensions). The LGBT people even hide their gender and do not disclose it due to fear of losing their job. The young LGBT people face ragging and harassment in schools, colleges, and university which in many cases leads to depression, school drop-out and homelessness. They gradually develop low self-esteem and low self-confidence and become isolated from friends and family. The parents of normal children don't allow them to mix with the LGBT children acting completely out of care and concern without realizing that this leads to isolation for the other one. Lack of communication between LGBT child and the parents often leads to conflict in the family. Many LGBT youths are placed in foster care or end up in juvenile detention or on the streets, because of family conflict related to their LGBT identity. LGBT teens have to face a very high risk of health and mental problems when they become adults because they are rejected by their parents and society at large.

According to a study, around 30 per cent of LGBT in the U.S have been abused by the members of their family for their different sexual orientation. Also, a survey revealed that about 40 percent of the homeless people constituted of LGBT. 'Studies done by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network [GLSEN] report that nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students face harassment. The 2007 National School Climate Survey found not only that LGBT students were harassed but 31.7% of LGBT students missed a class and 32.7% missed a day of school because of feeling unsafe.'

Additionally, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people face poverty and social stigma. They experience racism daily. They suffer from social and economic inequalities due to continuous discrimination in the workplace. These people mostly get addicted to drugs, alcohol, and tobacco to get themselves relieved of stress and rejection and discrimination. LGBT elders also face several problems. They cannot avail of the opportunities which are received by other senior citizens. Most of them feel isolated and they distance themselves from everyone. Very little is known about them because of widespread failure of governmental and academic researchers to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity in their studies of the aged. They also become victims of hate crimes. In some countries, homosexuality is regarded as a crime. It is illegal and is often met by imprisonment and fines. For example, in Muslim law, homosexuality is regarded as a sin and is unlawful. (Das, A.2018)

The first bold step was taken by USSR when it decriminalized homosexuality in around 1920s. It was at that time when society was conservative and was also

socially backward regarding the matters of sexuality. But this victory was short lived as during the rule of Stalin, homosexuality was re-criminalized again. Immediately after World War II, a lot of homosexual groups came to the forefront and emphasized love over sex. A movement called Homophile movement was started in some European countries in 1945 and continued up to around 1970. A new movement called Gay Liberation Movement started in 1970 and continued for four years. Homosexual groups like Gay Liberation Front [GLF] and Gay Activists' Alliance [GAA] were formed.

Till then, only gays and lesbians were in the limelight. Bisexuals started gaining prominence in LGBT movements in the 1970s. National Bisexual Liberation Group was formed in New York representing the bisexuals. The advocates of the Gay and Lesbian Rights argued that one's sexual orientation has nothing to do with gender identity. Homosexuality was considered as an illness across the world. But in 1979, Sweden became the first country in the world to remove homosexuality as an illness.

In modern India, Shakuntala Devi was the first to publish a study on homosexuality in 1977. Section 377 of Indian Penal Code talks about unnatural offenses stating homosexuality is illegal in India. The movement to repeal Section 377 was initiated by AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan in 1991. They published an article regarding Section 377 and wanted its annulment. In 2001, it again gained a momentum when a Public Interest Litigation was filed by Naz Foundation in Delhi High Court.

For the first time in the history of India, 'Third Genders' was given recognition and was officially recognized as another gender just as male and female. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India in its landmark judgment in 2013 created the 'third gender' status for hijras or transgenders. Earlier, while writing their gender, they were forced to write male and female, but now after this judgment, they can proudly describe themselves as 'third gender'.

The Government of India has been directed by the Supreme Court for treating the members of 'Third Gender' as socially and economically backward. The Supreme Court further opined that absence of law recognizing hijras as the third gender could not be continued as a ground to discriminate them in availing equal opportunities in education and employment. The third gender would be categorized as Other Backward Classes [OBC] which will help them to avail the opportunities of reservations in educational institutions and government jobs. The ideals enshrined in the Constitution of India by our founding fathers are defended by the Supreme Court's judgment. The verdict though pertains to only eunuchs or transgender people; it is indeed a ray of wisdom.

On 2 February 2016, criminalization of homosexual activity was reviewed by the Supreme Court. In August 2017, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the Right to Privacy is an inherent and fundamental right under Article 21 in the Indian Constitution, providing hopes to LGBT activists that the Court would soon strike down Section 377. The Court also ruled that a person's sexual orientation is a matter of privacy issue. In January 2018, the Supreme Court agreed to refer the question of the validity of Section 377 to a large bench for

examination before October 2018. The Supreme Court is going to hear petitions on Sec 377 on May 1, 2018. (Das, Aananya, International Journal for Emerging, Research & Development, Vol. I. Issue, 2) On 6th Sep. 2018 the Supreme Court of India decriminalized homosexuality by declaring section 377 of the Indian Penal code non constitutional.

9.6 CHALLENGES TO THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS

The issue of personal or religion-based and differentiated family law became controversial for feminists in **1985** in what is now referred to as the **Shah Bano case**. In India, personal law falls under the purview of religion, though individuals can choose secular alternatives. This choice is, however, circumscribed; a woman married under Muslim or Hindu law, for example, cannot seek divorce or alimony under secular law, she has to abide by what is offered by the religious laws by which she is/was married. Neither Muslim nor Hindu personal law entitles a woman to alimony. Under Muslim law she is entitled to the return of her engagement gift (*mher):* under Hindu law she is theoretically entitled to the gifts that went with her at marriage (*stridhan*). Finding an abnormal number of destitute divorced women in India, the British colonial government passed a law under the **Criminal Procedure Code (Section 125)**, which remains in Indian criminal law that was at issue in the Shah Bano Case.

Shah Bano was a seventy-five year old woman who had been abandoned by her husband and had filed for maintenance under Section 125. While her claim was being considered, her husband divorced her using the *triple talaq*. The Supreme Court, in its judgment, upheld Shah Bano's right to maintenance from her husband under both Section 125 and Muslim personal law. It asserted that Section 125 transcended personal law. The court was critical of the way women had traditionally been subjected to unjust treatment, citing statements by both Manu, the Hindi law maker, and the Prophet as examples of traditional injustice. And the court urged the government to frame a common civil code because the constitutional promise of a common or uniform civil code would be realized only at the government's initiative.

The judgment was widely criticized by feminists, liberals and secularists as well as by Muslim religious leaders for what was held to be unduly weighted critical comments on Muslim personal law. The *Ulema* (Scholar-priests) issued a *fatwa* (proclamation) that the judgment violated the teachings of Islam. Wide publicity was given to the *fatwa* and within a few months the whole issue took the form of a communal agitation claiming that Islam was in danger. One hundred thousand people demonstrated against the judgment in Bombay and at least as many in Bhopal, both cities with large Muslim populations. Supporters of the judgment were threatened, stoned and beaten up.

In **September 1987**, an incident of *Sati* in the village of **Deorala in Rajasthan sparked** off a campaign that gave rise to a furious debate that spanned not only the rights and wrongs of Hindu women but also questions of religious identity, communal autonomy, and the role of the law and the state in a society as complex and as diverse as India. Within a couple of weeks of the incident of *sati* several articles appeared that engaged in a polemic against Indian feminists accusing

them of being agents of modernity who were attempting to impose crass, selfish, market dominated views on a society that had once given the world ideas of spirituality. So Indian feminist stood accused of being westernists, colonialists, cultural imperialists, and, indirectly, supporters of capitalist ideology.

Given that there has been, on average, only one reported sati a year in post-independence India, the extraordinary debate that the 1987 sati incident aroused was puzzling. In a way it can be understood only as part of a process of politics reorganization in which the **death of Roop Kanwar, the girl who was immolated**, became the **symbol of Rajput identity politics**. In contrast to some of the other areas in which sati had been attempted; Deorala was a relatively highly developed village. The family was well off and the Kanwars had links with influential Rajputs and mainstream state-level politicians.

The tradition versus modernity argument further isolated feminists. The bogey of modernism was so successful that it masked the fact that sati was being used to create a tradition, despite feminist efforts to emphasize this. Tradition was defined so a historically and so self-righteously that it obscured the fact that the pro-sati campaign was run on modern lines, with modern arguments, and for modern purposes, such as the reformation of electoral blocs and identity-based community representation with the state.

However a closer look at the nature of women's support for the *pro sati agitation* revealed that this was ambiguous and at many points consisted of firmly differentiating between the worship and the actual practice of sati. An examination of the women who were mobilized for the pro-sati demonstration made clear that they were not in fact the women, who were most directly affected by the issue. Widows were conspicuously absent.

For most feminists, the campaign around sati revealed the growing opposition to feminism and spelled a considerable setback for the movement. Yet the challenges it posed to feminist self definitions yielded some valuable insights.

Check Your Progress II

i) Fill in the blanks-

   a) The search for historical examples of women's resistance led the feminists to scrutinize the .... and .... past to look at the role women played in broader movements for social transformation.

   b) One example of women's movement in the past was................ movement against deforestation.

   c) The early 1980's witnessed a series of .... movements against feminists ideas by sections of traditionalist society.

   d) In 1987, an incident of *Sati* took place in a Rajasthan village of .... where a young widow .... was made to commit Sati by her family. It gave rise to a furious debate in adverse multi-religious, multi-cultural society like India.

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9.7   LET US SUM UP

The contemporary Indian women's movement as well as the L.G.B.T+Q movement is a complex and perhaps the only movement today that encompasses and links such issues as work, wages, environment, ecology, civil right, sex, violence, representation, caste, class, allocation of basic resource, consumer right, health, religion, community and individual and social relationships. In this unit we have explained the sociological aspect of sex and gender. We have clarified role and status and the traditional status of women in India. An index of the movements influence is the extraordinarily large participation of women in most radical campaigns, particularly in urban areas. The emergence of a Women's liberation movement in the west has encouraged some sections of woman in India to fight for equality and justice. Myths with regard to the high status of Indian women are being exploded and protests are being raised against the use of woman as a sex symbol. We briefly explained the L.G.B.T+Q movement generally, as well as, especially in India. All these issues related to gender based movements have been discussed in this unit.

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9.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   Sex refers to the biological attributes of men and women, while gender is understood to be a social construct which includes the full range of personality traits, attitudes, feelings, values, behavior that society differentially ascribes to men and women

ii)   a) F, (b) T, (c) T, (d) F

iii)   The major reasons for the feminist movements in different regions of India ranges from low social status; exploitations and crimes like dowry murder's and rape.

Check Your Progress II

i)   a)   distant; immediate

       b)   Chipko

       c)   counter

       d)   Deorala; Roop Kanwar

ii)   The feminist movement in India was challenged because people belonging to different religions, such as, Hindus, Muslims, etc. were traditionally covered by their religious laws. Different legislations were passed to protect the interests of different categories of women. However, the religious bodies did not agree with these developments. Feminists agitated against traditional customs such as, triple talaq or Sati; and so on. This led to the opposition of the feminist movement during the 1980s.

UNIT 10 TRIBAL AND ETHNIC MOVEMENTS*

Structure

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- define the two main forms of social movements – tribal and ethnic movements in India;

- explain the nature and causes of tribal and ethnic movements;

- discuss the emergence of tribal and ethnic movements;

- describe the phases and salient features of tribal movements; and

- discuss the typology of ethnic movements.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we will discuss two forms of social movements, that is, tribal and ethnic movements. The unit is composed of two sections. The first section informs

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about the tribal movements in India. This section offers an insight into the nature of tribal movements and what lead to the tribal uprising through tracing the causal factors. This section also deals with various phases of tribal movements and derives salient features of tribal movements. The second section deals with ethnic movements in India. This section of the unit enlightens about the issues that lead to the emergence of ethnic movements in India. It also identifies the factors responsible for ethnic movements. Three major forms of ethnic movements based on social structure of ethnic groups are elucidated in the second section. This unit will enable the students to clearly make a distinction between these two forms of social movements.

10.2   TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

For the last two or three decades, human rights violations of the tribal communities (commonly called adivasis) has been on the rise. Article 342 of the Constitution of India has termed tribes as scheduled tribes and article 366(25) has defined scheduled tribes as: '*such tribes or tribal communities or parts or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this constitution*'. Two categories of schedules tribes can be pointed out here. These are frontier tribes and non-frontier tribes. Frontier tribes dwell in the northeast frontier states of India such as Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland. Tribes inhabiting these states constitute 11 per cent of the country's total tribal population. At the same time, there are non-frontier tribes who are geographically spread across the country however their concentration is high in states such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Orissa, Bihar, Lakshadweep Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli constituting 89 per cent of the total population of tribes in India.

Both these categories of tribes are ecologically cut-off from the mainstream society to a certain extent and demographically inhabited at proximate environs, relying more on land and forest resources (Paul, 1985). Inhabiting the borders of the larger society, tribal communities represent the lower sections of population. Despite their acquaintance with non-tribals, they retain their own identity through distinct patterns of living such as dialects, cultural heritage, life-styles, forms of religion, rituals, self-identity, values and so on (See: Paul, 1985).

Prior to the arrival of British, tribal communities dwelled in and around forest because of their traditional rights over the forest produce comprising essential commodities based on daily needs such as food, cattle rearing and grazing, construction of houses from timber wood, cultivation and so on. However, the policies of the British perturbed the long established traditional patterns of land ownership systems of tribals through creating a class of zamindars i.e., landlords, which though were regarded by tribals as outsiders. The newly created British landlord system reduced tribals to mere tenants thus transforming the traditional land ownership system into tenancy. This further created trader's class and marked the evolution of market economy. High rentals were extracted from tribals; they were stabbed physically for any defiance in the trade and even forced into selling out not only their property but their spouses and children as well against the debt.

In addition to these disturbances, the price on basic commodities left them in agonising conditions. There was no listening to the plight of tribal communities.

Subsequently, in response to exploitation caused by the British policies, tribal communities started revolts and this marked the beginning of tribal movements in India, which were guided by respective chiefs of tribal communities. These movements can be categorised into different phases which will be discussed in the following sections.

Activity 1

What is the word for 'tribe' in your language? Do you know of any tribal leader who gained political fame in India. Read about him/her and write an essay of about one page on her or him.

10.3 NATURE OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Tribal movements be it peasant, forest and land, identity or any other socially or political oriented, can be comprehended through two paths – violent movement and non-violent movement. Non-violent movements are a kind of resistance movements involving strategic bargain and negotiation with the oppressors without resorting to any form of violence. On the other hand, violent movement is a form of resistance wherein the suppressed erupt through revolts and other forms of violent resistance practices. Examples of non-violent and violent tribal movements include Tana Bhagat Movement and Mauriya Movement respectively. Tana Bhagat movement, which is a non-violent movement, points toward the struggle towards structural transformation of the communities. A common example of this structural transformation can be what M.N. Srinivas calls 'Sanakritization'. On the other hand, Mauriya Movement, a form of violent resistance, was directed towards reshaping and reforming the tribal patterns of livelihood involving forest and land.

10.4 CAUSES OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Tribal movements involve different issues that affected their livelihood and structure. These movements erupted because of the denial of their rights by the British. This suggests that tribal movements started against the tyrannies brought about by the British through their policies which denied the tribals of their rights on various fronts such as damaged their status, enhanced rent, evicted tribals from their own land, customary rights on forests, harassment, physical sufferings and enactment and imposition of new legal system which gave access to outsiders to enter into the tribal regions. Alongside, economy holds significance in the eruption of various tribal movements. Among all these causes, few are of much importance. For example forests, which was the major source of tribal livelihood, was cut down following the enactment of certain laws which legalized the cutting down of forest wood by timber merchants and contractors (Shah, 1990). This type of regulation not only deprived tribals of their rights over the produce but also lead to their harassment at the hands of officials. In this backdrop, following causes of tribal movements can be derived:

a)   In an attempt to increase agricultural produce by non-tribals, they discarded the traditional multiparty land-ownership among tribals which further resulted in their socio-economic differentiation.

b)   The tendency of missionaries to refuse to revolt against the government gives an impression that they were an extension of colonialism.

c) Enacting new forest regulations which shifted the control of tribals over forest land to the government. This also debarred tribals of their erstwhile rights of using forest for timber and grazing purposes. ((You may recall the unit 3 Tribe in Block 2 of this course)

d) The emergence of Zamindari system reduced the tribals to tenants and allowed the non-tribals to take over the settled agriculture and the tribals lost their agricultural land in this course of action.

e) Taxes imposed on timber usage, constraints on shifting cultivation due to land grab policy of the government, exploitation of tribals by money-lenders.

f) Considering tribal land as private estate as a result of which tribals lost their land.

10.5 DIFFERENT PHASES OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Tribal movements can be categorised into three phases, the first phase (1789-1860), the second phase (1860-1920) and the third phase (1920-1947). Under these three phases, there are various tribal revolts/movements in India as follows:

10.5.1 Tamar Revolts (1789-1832)

Led by Bhola Nath Sahay, tribal communities from Tamar revolted from 1789 to 1832 against the British oppression. Not only Tamar tribals, but they were joined by other tribes from Midnapur, Koelpur, Dhadha, Chatshila, Jalda and Silli who jointly revolted against the blemished align system of the British government. The blemished align system indicates the failure of the British government to secure the land rights of the tenants (cultivators) as a result of which they were evicted from their land. This apparently caused unrest among Tamar tribes and others in 1789. During the period from 1789 to 1832, Tamar revolt repeated seven times. The main cause of the revolt was the illegal withdrawal of land rights from the tribal communities. Various tribal communities such as Oraons, Mundas, Hos and Kols also joined the uprising following directions from their leader Ganga Singh. During the revolt, the tribals killed the 'dikus' in each village, torched houses and robbed their belongings. However the Tamar revolt was repressed by British in 1832-1833. The Ho-territory was occupied by the British as their estate and Ho-tribal leader was appointed to administer Ho-territory through rules enacted by the British.

10.5.2 The Kherwar Movement (1833)

Kherwar is a name which was attached to Santhals in ancient times. What triggered Kherwar movement was the tribals' desire to retain their independent territory which they enjoyed in the past. Bhagirath Majhi who initiated this movement announced to reinstate the lost independence of tribals provided however that they refrain from committing sins. Assuming the title of Babaji, Bhagirath Majhi promised the tribals of setting them free from the tyranny of oppressors if they worship Ram – the Hindu God.

10.5.3 Santhal Revolt (1855)

Santhal revolt started against the forced and unjust land ownership of Santhals by landlords. Not only against the landlords, Santhal movement of 1855 also erupted against money-lenders. This movement started under the leadership of two brothers – Sidho and Kanhu, who announced that the revolt can be called off after they take their land back. The two brothers took a pledge to bring an end to the oppression. The zamindars gathered in the Santhal's land and grabbed their crops. Santhals, armed with traditional weapons, submitted their petition to the Governor in Calcutta but were stopped which ignited violence. In this violence, thousands of Santhals were killed. The revolt lasted for around 60 days. However the movement compelled the government for a change in the existing policy. A huge volume of land was extracted from the possession of British and this land was renamed as 'Santhal Parganas'. Government also appointed chief for recovering the alienated land.

10.5.4 Bokta Movement (1858)

Bokta movement, which can be understood through its three phases, erupted in various parts of Chotanagpur. Singh (1983) has pointed out its three phases as the agrarian, revivalist and political phases. The agrarian phase and the revivalist phase saw protests against the landlords. Tribal tenants rebelled against the hike in land rent as well as their harassment by the landlords and the clashes took place relentlessly. On the political front, the tribals desired to form a separate territory having political autonomy.

10.5.5 Birsa Revolt (1895-1901)

Birsa revolt was headed by Birsa Munda, cherished as one of the great freedom fighters and saviour of Munda tribes, who revolted against the transformation of Munda agrarian system into a feudal state in Chotanagpur area. This revolt, like the earlier ones, was against the zamindars, traders and the government officers under the British regime. Munda tribe had a traditional system of land called as Khuntkari system according to which tribes enjoyed long established claim over the land. However in 1874, British changed land policies and thus implemented the zamindari system thereby forming two classes of landlords and tenants. The tenants comprising tribals were made to pay rent for their own land and their right over the land was sealed if they failed to pay the rent. In addition, the tenants were exploited in a number of ways such as eviction from land, harassment, land encroachment, increased rent, and so on. This pushed tribals to depend on money-lenders who would add high interest on the loans. As a result of this oppression, the tribals started rejecting the operation of outsiders to establish their own independent territory.

10.5.6 Midnapur Movement (1918-1924)

Though it started way back in 1760 against the British, however, the Midnapur peasant movement gained momentum during late 19th century following the encroachment of tribal land. Midnapur movement can best be understood through its two phases: one which overlapped with the non-cooperation movement of 1921-22; and two a phase which started following the arrest of Gandhi. Tribals were excluded from the non-cooperation movement up till 1920. During the beginning of 1921, efforts were made to include tribals also in this movement. However the Midnapur Zamindari Company created by Congress started its

oppression against the tribals who were paid low wages. This triggered agitation against the British. However Gandhi terminated the non-cooperation movement for the belief that tribal struggle was not acknowledged by the stakeholders under British (Dasgupta, 1985). Santhals gradually extended their movement against all oppressive operations. In 1922, tribals asserted their right over forest and the movement broke the barriers of Midnapur Zamindari Company and included Indian landlords also.

There were other movements also that can be counted under the three periods mentioned earlier. These are Jitu Santhal Movement in Malda, tribal movement in Orissa and tribal movement in Assam which were against the British introduced Zamindari system; the promulgation of section 144 and the arrest of tribals; and the encroachment of tribal land respectively.

10.6 SALIENT FEATURES OF TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

The exploitation and oppression against the tribals lead to a series of uprisings and movements. Among the oppressors include various stakeholders of the British Government, which they considered as 'outsiders' such as zamindars, thekedars, money-lenders, and other officials. There were regional movements against these stakeholders. Many of these movements were more so the social and religious movements in nature during their initial stages. However almost all the movements later fused with national uprisings. The anti-colonial agitations were ignited by land encroachment, eviction from land ownership, less wage, huge rent, putting an end to the feudal system of land ownership, and so on. All these movements erupted to safeguard the existential right of tribals. There was a chief from each tribal community to guide their respective movements. Tribal movements would often steer towards violence in which tribals were massacred, their houses torched and movements brutally cancelled. As a result of this, the tribals submitted themselves to the policies of British, which though deprived them of their rights and other interests. The normal laws in place at that time were deemed inapplicable to the tribal areas and therefore a new law called as Scheduled District Act (1874) was enacted and passed. The tribal areas thereafter were excluded from the Government of Indian Act (1935). However despite being excluded from the mainstream, the government continued to creep into tribal territories, which concealed all the exploitations against the tribals (Sonowal, 2008).

Activity 2

Visit a construction site in your neighbourhood and inquire about the origin of the labourers working on the site. Ask them if they are from a tribal community you may find out about who they are and about their socio-cultural background. Write a note of one page and discuss it with that of other students at your center.

Check Your Progress 1

i)   What do you understand by tribal movement?

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ii) Tribal communities dwell around lakes and rivers.   True (√) False (×)

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iii) Name the two paths of tribal movements.

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iv) Santhal Revolt took place in which year.

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10.7 ETHNIC MOVEMENTS

The word 'ethnic' has a wider usage among scholars across disciplines. Derived from "ethnos", scholars understand ethnicity in terms of its definition "groups in an exotic primitive culture" (Urmila, 1989: 13). In order for a community to be termed as an ethnic community, it must meet six standard principles. They are community name, common ancestry, shared historical memories, shared culture, definite territory and group cohesiveness (Smith, 1993). Ethnic communities are most often termed as minorities and categorized into three forms. The first is national minorities which include the traditional occupants of the nation. However, they are also believed to have come into existence as a result of the arrival of a new religion or converting to an alien religion to form their unique identity. The second is immigrant ethnicities who left their nation-state in search of livelihood and settled down at a different territory where they established immigrant connections with the inhabitants of same ethnic groups. The third is the refugee groups which though are analogous to the immigrant groups however the difference between the two lies in the former's occupation of a different territory due to the conditional settlements in their primary inhabiting territory.

Box 10.0: Ethnic Groups

Paul Brass (1991) discusses three ways of defining ethnic groups: a) in terms of objective attributes, b) by reference to subjective feelings and c) in relation to behaviour. The first definitions implies that there are some distinguishing *objective cultural features* that separate one group from the other-language, territory, religion, dress etc. All these are called *ethnic markers* through which distinctions between one ethnic group and another are emphasized between these are maintained. So, while the ethnic groups may interact with one another for the purpose of, say, economic activity, the objective ethnic markers ensure the continuity of separate group identity. The second aspect, i.e. presence of subjective feelings implies the existence of an *ethnic self-consciousness*. As mentioned earlier, at the base of ethnic affinity lies real or assumed common identity. The important thing to keep in mind is that the fact of common descent is not as important as the belief in it. It is not what is that is critical but *what people perceive*. In other words, ethnicity is a subjective construct, it is how we see ourselves. The third dimension, namely, the behavioural one, points to the existence of concrete, specific ways in which ethnic groups do or do not behave in relation to, or in interaction with other groups. In this sense, the normative behaviour of an ethnic group may include practices related to kinship, marriage, friendship, rituals etc. Thus, an ethnic group is a collectivity which is perceived by others in society as being different in terms of language, religion, race, ancestral home, culture etc., whose members perceive themselves as different from others and who participate in shared activities built around their actual or mythical common origin and culture. On the basis of these variables a group can be ranged from being barely ethnic to fully ethnic. It is a collectivity within a larger society characterised by elements like real or imaginary common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements such as kinship patterns, religious affiliations, language or dialect forms, etc. Also imperative is some consciousness of kind among the group members. Consequently, most definitions ethnicity and ethnic groups focus on objective and involuntary external markers, as well as, subjective and voluntary internal consciousness as its major elements.

The concept of ethnicity suggests that it is a process through which members of a certain group or community identify themselves and there are no ascribed territorial boundaries of ethnic groups. This may mean that ethnic movements erupt only because of the threat to shared attributes such as language, culture or identity. This sense of 'oneness' defines the ethnicity of a group based on collective identity; they have the potential to collectively strive for shared interests.

10.8 THE EMERGENCE OF ETHNIC MOVEMENTS

Inequality encountered by any individual, group or community which is endorsed by the government may incite them to erupt collectively against it and this marks the beginning of an ethnic movement. Ethnic movements do not just arise due to the failure to meet their economic or political demands, but what also sparked them is the threat to their distinct social identity (Hechter & Okamoto 2001). Policies during the colonial times as well as the modern policies implemented by the government used ethnic elements such as race, language, culture, etc. to

classify ethnic groups for the differential treatment. However this idea of unequal treatment intensified and convinced these groups to establish even broader identities.

Evidently, disparities among various ethnic groups tempted them for a joint action, and political break-ups were the causal factor for their movements. Disruption in the conventional functioning of society due to the shifting of power produces political opportunities. Any crisis in the country produces an environment for the ethnic elites to persuade ethnic groups to take part in uprisings. Except the transitions in power, there are other aspects of political interventions responsible for the rising of ethnic movements in the country. However, the state-politics is not the only cause factor of ethnic movements. There are other causal factors also that contribute equally to this kind of uprising. For example, constructing a hierarchy among various ethnic communities, which is a social construction, may result in the suppression of one by the other. Also there is a competition among various ethnic groups in economic markets as well as other institutions, which amplifies ethnic boundaries and consequently gives rise to a movement (Olzak 1992).

From the above discussions, we can derive several causal factors which led to the emergence of ethnic movements in India such as modernisation, political economy, inter community conflict, competition for resources, relative deprivation, social hierarchy, cultural gap, and so on.

10.9 MAJOR FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR ETHNIC MOVEMENTS

The rising ethnic tension in India has grabbed the attention of Indian sociologists to highlight the factors responsible for such tensions. Scholars have highlighted diverse factors responsible for ethnic movements in India. For example Rajni Kothari (1988) emphasizes that ethnic tension is the consequence of modernisation. Like him, Gyanendra Pandey (1990) and Harjot Oberoi (1994) consider ethnic conflict as an outcome of modernity and claimed that India in the past was free from the nuances of identity. However Omveldt (1990) opposed the romanticizing aspect of traditional India for the reason that hierarchy has always been a dominating feature of Indian society and the claim that multiculturalism is a feature of Indian society is a myth. The crucial causal factors of ethnic movements in India are:

1) The extreme competition for economy, the passion to safeguard age-old culture and the diverse cultural and linguistic groups.

2) Unequal economic development which lead to the underdevelopment of certain groups and their marginalisation.

3) Politicizing caste and religion, the chief components of identity formation, by political leaders for their political interests.

4) There was growing concern among both linguistic and religious ethnic groups about their assimilation into the mainstream, which was seen as a threat to their ethnic identity.

5)   The defective developmental policies created a feeling of alienation among the ethnic communities which further forced them to dislocate from their traditionally occupied territory thus bringing miseries in their lives.

Box 10.1

The origin and resurgence of ethnicity lie in intergroup contact, that is, when different groups come into one another's sphere of influence. Of course, the shape it takes depends on the conditions in that society. The second point is that ethnicity is used to meet the present demands of survival for the oppressed groups. When subjugated groups find it difficult to tolerate the dominance of others and make efforts to improve their position, ethnicity is generated.

10.10   TYPOLOGY OF ETHNIC MOVEMENTS

As mentioned previously, ethnicity is an ongoing social construction process through which ethnic groups keep sprouting from time to time. This creates a kind of majority-minority duality depending upon the structure of ethnic groups. Such a typology of ethnic groups is a two-dimensional process: one where a distinction is made between majority and minority movements or a distinction among various groups based on class; the second dimension pertains to the ethnocentric movements wherein ethnic minorities with a common identity strive to raise their position through transcending the boundaries. To elucidate further, we will now turn to the types of ethnic movements, which is two-fold.

10.10.1   Ethnic Majority Movements

Dominated by ethnic majorities, this form of movement can be classified into four types. The first group-focussed movement, which is an ethnocentric group movement, intends to promote the interests of their group. The second type of this movement involves those majority groups who occupy a lower place within the hierarchical order of the majority groups. The third type of movement, an issue-focussed movement, considers factors which bring in change in the society through promoting certain issues such as peace, social cohesion, etc. The fourth type of movement is a group-focussed collaborative movement intended to uplift the ethnic minorities.

Ethnic majorities, unlike minorities, do not follow a conscious process of developing collective identities. They instead have a national identity or sometimes identified through their religion. The majority movements are blatantly hostile towards others especially the minorities. This hostility in the majority movement considers ethnic minorities as a threat to their socio-political and socio-cultural status. This diminishes the network ties between the majority and minority groups which further creates 'Us-Them' duality within the ethnic structure. As a result, majority groups perceive minorities as their opposites rather than potential collaborators. A common example of this type of movement is the Naga Movement of Manipur led by one of the major ethnic communities.

The Naga revolt started in 1950 and this is one of the oldest ethnic majority movements in India. The revolt has its origin in Manipur which comprises diverse ethnic groups such as Nagas, Meteis, Kukis, and so on. The existence of these various ethnic groups are the main cause of ethnic insurgency however primarily the main cause has been the demand for autonomy and thus Naga movement is

also referred to as secessionist movement. The demand for the formation of a separate state arose due to the internal territorial dispute between Nagas and Kukis after the formation of 7 North-Eastern States. At the same time and following the formation of 7 states, Meitei tribes opposed the formation of separate states. They instead demanded a common territory for all. The dispute among all these tribes has lead to communal conflict among them and thus, Nagas and Kukis changed their faith by turning to Christianity while Meiteis followed Hinduism. The protests usually take the form of strike calls and other forms of non-violent agitations. After 1997, both Nagas and Kukis demanded a separate statehood and this has resulted in confusion among various ethnic groups in the Manipur. There is a continuity of this conflict over the formation of separate state even in the present times also.

Bodo movement is yet another example of this type of ethnic movement. Initiated in Assam during the colonial times, Bodo movement strengthened into an extremist assertion during 1980s. The main causes that lead to the rise of Bodo movement include discrimination and biasness faced by the Bodo community from the dominant community. Leaders of this movement demanded a separate statehood because they considered Bodos as ethnically distinct from other inhabitants of Assam. In 1960, the coming of Assam Official Language Bill was seen as a threat to the linguistic identity of Bodos. This lead to violent mass movements and it is for this reason also that Bodo Community demanded an autonomous territory. The intention was to divide Assam into two equal halves. In 1993, the failure to fulfil the demands of Bodo community resulted in mass agitation. The situation further worsened due to the atrocities of Bodoland Security Forces. Ethnic cleansing by the armed forces gave the movement a communal turn which resulted in the death of many and many left homeless. Conflict continued until an accord was signed in 2003 between the armed rebels and the state which weakened the intensity of conflict. However no such progress was witnessed in terms of safeguarding the identity and language of the Bodo community.

10.10.2 Ethnic Minority Movements

Dominated by ethnic minorities, this type of movement entails both 'issue' and 'group' oriented movements. The group-oriented movement is channelized toward the developmental aspects of ethnic minorities. Examples of this type of movement include civil rights movement, separatist movement, inter-sectional movement, and so on. Ethnic minorities are a secluded group in terms of economic advantages however there are exceptions to it. Despite some being economically well-off, they are discriminated due to their status.

In addition, their identity is determined on the basis of their class and the place where movement takes place. Such movements comprise people from ethnic minority community and therefore intended for the interests of oppressed groups of people. They have weaker or no network ties within the society as a result of which they are always under the threat of being dominated by the majority. However, primarily the issues which are causal factors for minority movements include social hierarchy, sub-ordination, social exclusion, fewer resources, and so on. Though in India, there have been no such movements on the part of the ethnic minorities such as Muslims except the Muslims in the State of Jammu and Kashmir who demand for an autonomous and liberal state.

10.10.3 Mixed Majority-Minority Movements

This kind of ethnic movement involves both ethnic majorities and minorities. In these movements, the minorities participate in large number in the movements of majorities and vice-versa. This kind of movement is also called as solidarity movement since the groups in the binaries organise movements for the interests of other group. To elaborate, the ethnic majorities organise movements in support of minorities while as minorities support and organise movements for majorities. However, there is always a tension in terms of majority-minority divide when both the groups merge to support a movement. The causal factors for such tension include the factors such as hierarchy, culture, power, motives behind organising movements, and so on. However people participating in such movements will have different aims as a result of which such movements are prone to internal clashes the basis of which can primarily be resource allocation and leadership. This type of movement entails struggle for representation and/or leadership of a particular territory inhabited by both ethnic majority and minority.

Other than the three forms of ethnic movements discussed above, there can also be mixed minority and mixed majority movements. Mixed minority movement comprises participants from various minority groups based on the internal hierarchical order. Such mixed minority movement is jointly organised by various minorities over issues where the participating members are similar to each other in terms of being underprivileged and ignored by the ethnic majorities. On the other hand, mixed majority movements involve participants from various ethnic majority groups within the hierarchical structure in the majority group.

Check Your Progress 2

i) What are the six standard principles for a group to be called as an ethnic group?

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ii) The causal factor for ethnic movements primarily is

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iii) According to Rajni Kothari, ethnic tension is the consequence of hierarchy.

    True (   )   False (   )

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iv) Mention two major types of ethnic movements.

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10.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have dealt with two major movements in India, that is, tribal and ethnic movements. The tribal movements were more oriented towards the protection of their land and forest area as well as culture from the clutches of British. The contemporary status of tribals is the outcome of the rebellious movements that took place since late 18th century. Tribal people resisted all forms of suppression and exploitation by zamindari system, politicians, British officers or other representatives of the suppressors. The failure of the government to protect the resources of tribal communities forced them to organise movements against them. This unit offers different phases of tribal movements in India, the nature of these movements and their importance. It also traces the causal factors for the uprising of tribals. At the same time, the unit also presents a clear picture of ethnic conflicts in India. It elucidates how ethnic movements started in India. Ethnicity is considered as a social construct; therefore, identities based on ethnicity cannot be construed as natural. And for this reason, the unit offers the causal factors of ethnic movements in India which includes factors such as economic, political and cultural factors which determine the identity of a particular ethnic group. Ethnic movements were mostly against the hierarchical system existent within the ethnic structure comprising the ethnic majorities and minorities. They were organised to safeguard the cultural and political identities of ethnic groups and do not pose any threat to the nation.

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10.13   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

i)   Tribal movements are social movements organized against the government practices that affect the livelihood and overall structure of the tribal communities.

ii)   False

iii) Violent movements and non-violent movements

iv)   1855

Check Your Progress 2

i)   1)   Community name,

2) Common ancestry,

3) Shared historical memories,

4) Shared culture,

5) Definite territory

6) Group cohesiveness

ii) Political Break-ups

iii) False

iv) 1) Ethnic majority movements

2) Ethnic minority movements

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Block 5
State, Society and Religion

BLOCK 5   INTRODUCTION

The fifth and final Block, **State, Society and Religion** highlights two related but different issues or concerns of society in India. First, is Communalism and second is Secularism. Here the historical, social and critical issues linked with both these terms have been described, discussed and analysed.

UNIT 11   COMMUNALISM*

Structure

11.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the meaning of the terms communal and communalism

- discuss the social and historical background in which communalism emerged as a social phenomenon in India; and

- explain the different view points on communalism

11.1   INTRODUCTION

This is the fifth and the last block of your course on **Sociology of India**. This block titled **State, Society and Religion** deals with two major issues faced by Indian society and its unity and integrity. These issues are (a) communalism and (b) secularism. In this unit we will focus on the issue of communalism in India. To begin with, the term communalism has its roots in the term commune or community which means a group of people who swear allegiance to one's own community, religion or ethnic group than the society at large. Further, to elaborate, in sociological lexicon the concept of communalism can be seen as a form of collective outburst of one community against the other. To understand the social phenomenon of communalism, it is pertinent to understand the very nature of society. Society plays a very important role in genesis of communalism. It is important to note that Indian society was never homogenous throughout history. It was highly diverse- culturally, religiously, caste-wise and linguistically, as you learnt in the first unit of this course-Unity and Diversity in India. But there was hardly any tension between these groups. However, most of the scholars agree that communalism is a modern phenomenon and not a medieval phenomenon as it all began with the establishment of British Rule in India. The reasons that can

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be taken into consideration for this disharmony are: The British divisive policies, competitive nature of colonial rule, political and social structure and backwardness of colonial society with stunted economic growth. We will explain some of these aspects in this unit.

11.2 COMMUNALISM: MEANING AND DEFINITION

The term community and commune stand for two different concepts and should not be used in common parlance as the same. Yerankar (1999:26) argues that community and communal are two different concepts. The former is used to express the fellowship of relations or feelings, common character, agreement and sharing a common culture and space. The latter means an expression of heightened sense of community feelings. Since it is associated with a religious community, it implies exclusive loyalty to one's religion and all its related dimensions. According to Seth (2000:17), it signifies inter communal rivalries and social tension, economic, political or cultural differences of the rulers and the ruled. It is an ideology which determines the gradual evolution of relationships between two communities both within and without their respective folds. Dixit (1974:1) argues that communalism is a political doctrine which makes use of religio-cultural differences to achieve political ends. When, on the basis of religio-cultural differences, a community initiates political demands deliberately, then communal awareness turns into communalism. Sabrewal (1996:130) argues that communalism as a concept emerged due to the fact that members of a multi-religious society had to witness and confront the behavioral pattern practiced by specific community per se. It clearly shows that the term multi religiosity may sound unique as a Sociological proposition, however the differences need to be understood. For instance, social unease and tension is generated in the communities by sheer differences in clothing patterns, life style, facial marks, one's language and manners. These differences are equally governed by religious sanction of each specific community that creates a specific identity for the groups in the community. Awareness of socio-religious identities gradually get established and are mutually acknowledged. The awareness of socio religious identities help one constitute useful social maps in one's mind demarcating the social territory into sacred, friendly or neutral and hostile. Generally, this may be due to the propaganda and other factors such as prejudices, hostilities and negative feelings against each other. It is therefore argued that all depends upon the nature and type of interactive patterns between people of different religions and cultures. In case they do not hurt the religious sentiments and challenge religious identities, then there is no problem. But if they do, by chance or choice develop hostility against the other this is what leads to outbreak of communal outbursts and communal conflicts. Kamath (2003) tries to explain the meaning of communalism through the concept of communal harmony in the context of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic society. When various communities live together within a territory with understanding and cooperation, there is communal harmony. On the other hand, whenever such groups, either ethnic or religious, fight for their exclusiveness, group identity or group interest even at the cost of national interest or try to impose their way of life on other group, there is communal disharmony and this is termed as communalism. This explanation signifies that lack of understanding and cooperation between religious communities is the basic reason of communalism.

11.3 FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GROWTH OF COMMUNALISM IN INDIA

There may be several factors that may be attributed to the cause and growth of Communinalism in India. Some scholars attribute this cause due to stagnant economy during the British Rule. The stagnation of economy may have affected the aspirations and economic prosperity for certain sections within society. Scholars opine that this section of society usually termed as 'Middle Class' used communalism as a weapon for their own survival at the cost of other classes in society. Subsequently, other leaders from the community and political parties joined to fuel the tension of Communalism in India. This may be well illustrated with the emergence of modern politics with its roots in **partition of Bengal in 1905** and feature of separate electorate under **Government of India Act, 1909**.Later, British government also appeased various communities through **Communal award in 1932**, which witnessed strong resistance from Gandhiji and others. All these acts were done by the British government to appease Muslims and other communities, for their own political needs. This feeling of communalism has deepened since then, fragmenting the Indian society and being a cause of unrest. Let us now discuss the core factors in detail.

Box 11.0: Divide and Rule Policy of British

On the other hand, in the case of religion, the British took advantage of the existing religious pluralism. Especially, in the aftermath of the revolt of 1857 by the *sepoys* of British army, the colonial rulers realised that if they wished to continue their rule over India, then they had to break the country from within on religious lines. They adopted the policy based on Roman maxim, '*Divide et Impera*' (Divide and Rule). Even though the revolt was a result of several political, social, religious and economic factors, the unity that Hindu and Muslim *sepoys* showcased in what is considered the immediate military cause of the revolt was alarming for the British. In what was an eye opener for the colonial rulers, both Hindu and Muslim *sepoys* refused to use the cartridges of the new Enfield rifle, which were greased with cow and pig fats.

To break this unity became their primary concern. Soon after in 1905, they divided Bengal, which was then the epicentre of freedom struggle in India, on religious lines. While East Bengal became a Muslim majority state, West Bengal had majority Hindus. Then in 1909, they introduced separate electorate for Muslims through Morley Minto Act, which was a step towards breaking the religious unity and taking the advantage of religious pluralism in India. At another level, the British started giving preference to Sikhs over Hindus and Muslims for their army jobs, giving rise to the notions of Sikhs as the martial race of India. This partiality towards the Sikh was because of the support they had given to the British in the 1857 uprising. They also created the myth of martial races creating the Gorkha identity out of the hill men who were loyal to them. The British sowed the seeds of discord between the major religious communities, especially the Hindus and Muslims as it was the only way they could get control over the various Indian principalities by playing them against each other.

British Policy of Divide and Rule

In the pre-independence period the British used the policy of Divide and Rule to weaken the nationalist aspirations by creating a cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims, favoring one community against the other in terms of services and opportunities. It resulted in communal tensions between the two groups and therefore, it is considered that the Hindu-Muslim disunity took shape during the continuation of British Rule in India.

In this regard, clear demarcation was made by many historians between the ancient period of Indian history and the medieval. Prominent among them was British historian James Mill of the early nineteenth century. They endorsed that since ancient India was ruled by Hindu rulers, it was a period of much growth and prosperity against the continuous decay of the medieval period under the Muslim rulers. This readily suggests that the basic character of polity in India is defined by religion which relied on the beliefs that Indian society and culture had reached ideal heights in the ancient period. On the contrary, Muslim communalism harped upon the glory of the Muslim rulers. Such distorted texts of Indian history significantly contributed to the rise of communalism.

During the national movement, a strong Hindu religious element was introduced in nationalist thought. The orientalist writings which glorified the Hindu religion and period in history became the basis for the propogation of nationalist ideas and pride for the motherland. In the process the Muslim were seen as alien.

Other factors which are believed to fan the flames of communalism include rumors and distorted news publicized by media which disseminates false information to the public. Also, political parties resorted to the politics of appeasement whereby sanctions were used to appease different ethnic, religious, cultural groups for votes. This vote bank politics greatly followed tactics of appeasement by provisioning services and opportunities to a few sections of the population against the other sections.

Check Your Progress 1

i)   What do you understand by communalism?

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ii)   Tick the true (T) or false (F) statement

a)   The British policy of divide and rule during pre-Independence period was to facilitate their rule in India.   (   )

b)   The diversities found in Indian society did not allow the British to rule over India   (   )

c)   British historians like James Mill during early 18th century associated ancient India when it was ruled by Hindu rulers to be an age of prosperity.

                                                                                                       (   )

d) One of the factors that gave rise to communalism was rumours and distorted news publicized by media. ( )

11.4 COMMUNAL RIOTS

Having discussed the concept of communalism, the other concept which needs discussion is "Communal Riot", which is a collective manifestation of religious feelings and sentiments against the others. A communal riot, in general refers to a collective violent manifestation of one's identity, ideas and beliefs, etc. in relation to other religious community for the realization of certain interests. These differences are sometimes openly manifested and sometimes hidden but presented in a subtle way. It is, most often, a consequence of the spread of communal ideology. Many examples of communal riot could be cited in the Indian context. Infamous among them are the following-

• **Partition of India,1947**

• **Anti-Sikh riots, 1984**

• **Ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindu Pundits in 1989**

• **Babri masjid demolition in Ayodhya, 1992**

• **Assam Communal violence,2012**

• **Muzzaffarnagar violence, 2013**

Activity 1

Read the newspaper/journals/books on any one of the above mentioned communal riot and write a report of one page on its cause, leadership and ultimate consequence. Discuss your report with other students at your Study Center.

11.5 UNDERSTANDING COMMUNALISM

This section tries to understand the various view points offered to explain communalism in Indian contexts.

11.5.1 Colonialist Viewpoint

The British seemed to see 'Hindu-Muslim antagonism' much earlier than the term 'communalism' emerged. Colonial thinkers like Hugh McPherson in his work 'Origin and Growth of Communal Antagonism' rejects the idea that 'communalism' is "a modern invention, the product of recent political developments", which refers specifically to the politics of separate electorates. In order to prove his point McPherson cites the Benares riots of 1809 and the testimony of a "landholder of Bengal" to the age-old animosity between Hindus and Muslims which dates back to the Muslim invasion of India. McPherson emphasizes that "the religious basis of communal dissension" began to be "reinforced by political factors" with Tilak's establishment of the 'Anti-Cow-Killing Society' in 1893, which he suggests was designed to "stimulate the militant spirit of Hinduism and establish its domination of the Indian political world"

11.5.2 Nationalist Viewpoint

For the colonialist, 'communalism' is a pre-colonial problem which is irremediable. For the nationalist, 'communalism' is a colonial problem with its

remedy being nationalism .Under this rubric, communalism in India develops as a concomitant to Indian nationalism and is nothing but nationalism driven into religious channels. For the nationalist, while both nationalism and 'communalism' were responses to colonialism, the former was the 'right' response and the latter, the wrong one. The nationalist project a unitary and symbiotic culture of historic co-operation between Hindus and Muslims which was thwarted with the colonial rule especially with the policy of Divide and Rule, of the British rulers in India which gave rise to communalism.

11.5.3 Some Scholarly Responses

The most notable theorist on 'communalism', Bipan Chandra, who wrote *Communalism in Modern India* in 1984 worked very clearly within nationalist frames. Chandra and other nationalist historians emphasised that the phenomenon of 'communalism' is a 'modern' one and could not have existed before colonialism. Clearly, since any form of 'popular' politics could not have existed before the British advent, Chandra attributed 'communal politics' to colonial origins.

As Chandra writes "Communalism was not a partial or sectional view of the social reality; it was its wrong or unscientific view. Communalism was not narrow or false because it represented only one community but because it did not do either. The communalist not only failed to represent national interests, he did not represent even the interests of the 'community' it claimed to represent" (Chandra 1984: 17).

Thus, nationalism represented the struggle for national liberation from the colonial state and for the formation of an independent state. It was historically valid at the moment as it provided a real solution to a real problem – national liberation as against colonial domination (Chandra 1984: 22).Colonial and nationalist explanations of 'communalism' seemingly do not enjoy much credit today. Most contemporary work on 'communalism' would be dubbed constructivist. The fore-most in this section is Bernard Cohn. However, Cohn's brand of constructivism has seen several tributary developments and branches. While Cohn's basic argument was that the colonizer's structure of administration generated sociological categories (such as, the schedules castes, scheduled tribes etc.) that often became the source of conflict in India. His supporters and followers have found a variety of reasons besides colonial administration to prove that the colonisers succeeded in implementing not only sociological categories through administrative techniques but identities, consciousness and nationalism also emerged through the prism of the colonial knowledge system. Gyanendra Pandey's (1992) writings reflect these views. Pandey treats 'communalism' as a product of nationalism. However, he seeks to distinguish his stand from those who have considered communalism as 'deviant' or 'under-developed' nationalism.

Anti-Modernist

The last section is essentially devoted to the work of only one scholar who speaks not of 'communalism' so much as an analysis of 'secularism'. It is perhaps ironic that one can see the problem in greater clarity in his work. In his '*The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance*' (Nandy,1998), Nandy begins by explaining why one needs to examine the "category" of secularism. His proposition is that "post-colonial structures of knowledge in the

third world" are often characterised by a "peculiar form of imperialism of categories" which hegemonize a "conceptual domain" so effectively that the original domain vanishes from our awareness and is replaced by a concept that is produced and honed in the West (Nandy 1998: 321). His project then is to recover the domain of 'religious tolerance' which is the question relevant to South Asia, from the hegemonic discourse of 'secularism. He goes on to suggest that traditional India had answers to questions of religious tolerance.

Nandy's arguments get caught up in a binary mode of tradition/modernity and faith/ideology. He acutely points out how colonialism has subjected certain knowledge domains to an imperialism of categories such that all traces of the original problem disappear. Given this proposition, his investigation of the concept of secularism is well founded. However, he does not answer why he sets out to rescue 'religious tolerance' from the domain of secularism. Was secularism an answer to religious intolerance in India? Nandy traces a trajectory of the concept of 'secularism' in Indian politics but ignores the fact that the word gained legitimacy in colonial India.

Thus, Nandy's problem itself seems a little skewed. He presumes that there was peace within traditional society and that this peace was connected to religious tolerance and it is this traditional religious tolerance that he wants to recover. Instead one could ask whether tolerance had anything to do with religion at all.

11.6 COMMUNALISM IN INDIA: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

The projection of the idea of India being a Hindu majoritarian state found its expression among the writings and discussions for an assertive Hindu ideology in the colonial era as mentioned above. This deliberate engagement with history became an important component in the political self-making in the 1800's. Even within the colonial models of historiography, history was interpreted which exemplified Hindu artistic achievement which declined and was then defeated by the Muslim invaders, who then is replaced by the colonial rulers. It is important to understand that this construction of nationalist historiography is the very ground on which the current Hindu nationalist models of India's past is based. Many contemporary religious and non-religious movements come to share idioms which see the nationalist state within the Hindu pantheon.

During the British rule, it was important to reimagine a single idea of nationhood in order to drive away the Britishers. Thus, the task of glorifying only selective instances of certain episodes of history such as the Rajput states and the Maratha confederacy which resisted the Britishers coming to India. Gradually there began a symbolic representation of Hindu Motherland. Towards the later part of the 19th century, this idea was then borrowed and extended by Hindu reformist organisations such as the Arya Samaj which advocated a return to the Vedas and had confidence in the narrative Hindu decline with the advent of the colonial rulers which needs to be revived. Another strand borrowed from the European race theory, that India is a land of the Aryans was also injected to the nationalist paradigm.

In the writings of Savarkar reflected this notion and he writes that only those who could establish Aryan descent qualify to be within the Hindu "rashtra" and not others belonging to the other religious groups.

Jawaharlal Nehru's secular notion of Indian identity was given cognizance, after the inception of India as a republic after 1947.The then prime minister was against the intrusion of any religious identity politics within the workings of the post colonial state. Here, what Nehru meant was to separate religion from state and to give importance to all religions. This is so because in order to overcome the divisive politics of the colonial state of dividing the Hindus and the Muslims. The alternate of portion and aftermath of partition and derisive politics in pre-independent India made it important that the solidarity of the nation was given a priority and corrideration.

Thus under, Nehru's secular guidance and Gandhi's stewardship the Congress party that led India to Independence endorsed inter-communal tolerance rather than strong secularist ideology.

Check Your Progress II

i)   In what ways did the colonialist viewpoint of communalism differed from the nationalist viewpoint? Discuss.

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ii)   Fill in the blanks:-

    a)   One of the notable theorist on communalism ————wrote the book "**Communalism in Modern India"** in 1984 where he has written that it is a ————phenomenon.

    b)   During the British rule, it was important to —————— a single idea of nationhood in order to drive away the —————— from India.

This traditional secularism as propounded by Nehru and the Congress was based on religious freedom, neutrality and reformative justice. Though this notion of secularism did not appeal to many who felt it was pseudo secular, as they felt it oppressed certain communities over others.

However, it is not only the voices of some who were skeptical of independent India's secular polity but also many intellectuals who have been criticising the notion of secularism on which the Indian Constitution was based. They see secularism as a myth and alien to India's needs. Critics such as Ashish Nandy, Partha Chatterjee ,T.N. Madan and Gyanendra Pandey vehemently oppose the

Hinduistic notions of the Hindutva wagon as well as the Indian state which aspires for a homogenising modern state. Borrrowing from Gandhi's concept of villages being little republics and whose very nature is local and fragmented, they argue that both Hindutva and secular nationalism are intolerant of diversity. Although these critics are powerful, we still need to comprehend that the issue of secularism produces equality in general, and therefore the idea of political democracy.

Box 11.1

We need to understand that the modern communalism or the rule of majoritarianism finds its justification from the historical past. And hence it is of utmost relevance to be aware of the communal approach to the interpretation of ancient and medieval history as well. The Hindu communalists try to project an ideal Hindu society while the Muslim communalists do the vice-versa .We should not forget that the historical interpretation can be the product of contemporary ideology. The choice of events that are chosen might be guided by the subjectivity of the historian. Hence, historiography is critical of such interpretation of the past that might not be objective. Historical writing is one of the most sensitive intellectual areas with repercussions on popular nationalism and beliefs. There are many instances and assumptions in relation to Indian history which might not be outrightly communal but can be fitted within the purview of communal viewpoint as certain instances and assumptions are not understood within its historical context. As for instance, Mahmud Ghazni, being a Muslim was assumed to be despoiler of Hindu Temples since Islam is against idol worship. Little effort is given to understand further the causes of Mahmud's such behaviour.

Such communal approach is crucial because of two factors .Firstly, communal interpretation of history is poor quality history and secondly, historians cannot accommodate their discipline to degenerate to the extent that false history becomes instrumental in the promotion of political mythology .These factors are crucial and needs to be taken into account in order to understand all the forces that went into the making of India's past.

Communal violence is common now days throughout the world. They are known by various alternative names, as in China, the communal violence in Xinjiang province is called ethnic violence. Communal violence and riots have also been called non-State conflict, violent civil or minorities unrest, mass racial violence, social or inter-communal violence and ethno-religious violence. The Indian society will continue to experience such violent caste and communal eruptions as long as it does not find political and economic equilibrium in terms of castes and communities. The rise of OBCs on one hand, and impact of globalisation on Indian economy on the other, will continue to cause occasional eruption of violence in Indian society for quite some time. Caste and communal polarisation will be with us as long as we are not able to create an egalitarian society.

11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit on 'Communalism' we explained to you the meaning and definitions of 'communalism'. What are the basic reasons which cause the situation of communal tension and disharmony in a multi-religious society. Here in this unit

we have described to you the main factors which have led to the rise of 'communal' feelings in India. We have given the past history and described the three different viewpoints on communalism in India and tried to explain the different responses of different social scientists on communalism in India.

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11.3   SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

I)   **Check Your Progress I**

i)   When different socio-religious, ethnic communities live together within a territory fight with one another for their exclusiveness, group identity or group interest even at the cost of national interest or they try to impose their way of life on others, thus causing communal disharmony and violence. This is so called communalism

ii)   (a) T (b) F   (c) T (d) T

II) Check Your Progress II

i) The colonialist believed that 'communalism' was a pre-colonial phenomena which is irremediable i.e. which cannot be treated. However, the nationalists believed that 'communalism' could be tackled effectively by nationalism itself since they believed that 'communalism' was nothing but nationalism gone the religious way. Nationalism was the right way while communalism was not, to deal with colonial rule in India.

ii) a) Bipan Chandra, modern

b) reimagine, British

UNIT 12   SECULARISM*

Structure

12.0   OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will able to:

- understand the meanings of the terms secularization and secularism;

- discuss the social and historical background in which secularization emerged as a social phenomena;

- analyse the peculiar nature of secularism which is adopted in India; and

- understand the problems and difficulties in the practice of secularism in India.

12.1   INTRODUCTION

You learnt about "Communalism" in the previous unit and how this issue emerged and deeply influences society in India today. Related with the concept of communalism is the concept of secularism. Here, in this unit we will discuss the

process of secularism which is called seculaisation and the concept of secularism which is a value.

In our first section we will introduce you to the meaning of the term secularization and secularism. To be able to understand how these terms came to be used we would like to take you to the historical and social background of these processes. We will also show the nature of secularization in contemporary society in our next section. Finally we will be discussing the nature of secularism in India. For you to understand the peculiarities and the difficulties thereof, we would appraise you with various historical as well as contemporary dynamics in the practice of secularism.

12.2 SECULARISATION AND SECULARISM

You must have come across the word secularism and secularisation several times. We are sure you must have wondered what exactly they mean.

The terms secularisation and secularism have no definite definition. They have different meanings depending on various situations and perspectives. We will try and have a look at some of these meanings. First, we will try and understand what secularisation is all about and then we will go on to the term secularism which is an outcome of the process of secularisation.

12.2.1 The Term Secularisation

The word secular is derived from the Latin word 'secular', which means the 'present age or generation'. The word secular came to be associated with the social process of secularisation.

Secularisation came into use in Europe, to describe the transfer of territories previously under the control of the church to the dominion of secular authority or the state. The distinction that was already prevalent in Christian conception between the sacred and secular (sacred as all that is supernatural, and secular as all that is mundane) was brought into the fore to assert the superiority of the sacred.

The term, however, was applied in a different way when the concept of secularisation acquired a more general, sociological connotation.

12.2.2 The Sociological Connotation of Secularisation

Social thinkers have used the word secularisation to indicate a process whereby the religious institutions and religious conceptions and understanding have lost control in worldly matters — economy, polity, justice, health, family, and so on. Instead, there emerged empirical and rational procedures and conceptions about the world in general.

Describing the process of secularisation, Bryan R. Wilson writes that in secularisation process "the various social institutions gradually become distinct from one another and increasingly free of the matrix of religious assumptions that had earlier informed...inspired and dominated their operation. Prior to this change, social action over a very wide field of human activity and organisation (including work, social and interpersonal relationships, juridical procedures,

socialisation, healing) is regulated in accordance with supernaturalist pre-conceptions. The process of structure differentiation in which social institutions (the economy, the polity, morality, justice, education, health, and family) become recognised as distinctive concerns operating with considerable autonomy. It is a process in which conceptions of the supernatural lose their sovriegnty over human affairs, a pattern broadly identified as secularism. Conceptions of the supernatural are gradually displaced from all social institutions except those specifically devoted to this — these are increasingly circumscribed religious institutions" (Wilson 1987 : 159).

The definition of secularisation is greatly bound by the definition of religion. As long as religion is defined in, not so abstract terms and is defined substantively as beliefs, attitudes, activities, institutions and structures pertaining to the supernatural, it is possible to assess the extent of decline of religious influence. But if we were to define religion in functional terms, as some sociologists have done, as any set of beliefs, ideas and activities that perform indispensable functions to the society it is very difficult to employ the term secularisation, because when we use the term secularisation we are discussing the process that leads to the decline of supernaturally oriented activities and beliefs in all aspects of life. And a distinct separation of various institutions in the society.

We can see the separation of the supernatural belief from secular activities by the way we approach and understand disease for instance. We don't always have a supernatural explanation to understand disease and illness. We have scientific and empirical explanations instead.

These changes have, in fact, affected even religion itself.

12.2.3 Secularisation within Religion

One aspect of secularisation is that religions modify their doctrines and practices in response to the changing needs of their members and in-response to changes in society.

For example, in 1976, the Episcopal Church in the United States of America officially allowed women to become priests. And. in England it was only recently that the Church allowed women to become priests, causing much controversy. We can see how the Church responded to the changing situation and the position of women in society.

Secularisation in religion is usually accompanied by increase in attention to public issues. Secular and profane activities have become as important as the sacred. Thus we find religious institutions getting involved with running of modern hospitals and secular educational institutions or engaging in philanthropic activities. Religion in industrial societies often reflects the pragmatism of our age, and in doing so, is increasingly moving away from the supernatural.

So far we have discussed what the term secularisation meant in its various situations and aspects. We still have not talked about the term secularism.

12.2.4 Secularism as a Value

Secularism was an ideological goal of the new political philosophy and movement after the French Revolution. Still later in 1851 George Jacoab Holyoake coined

the term secularism. He declared it as the only rational basis of political and social organisation. Holyoake questioning the religious basis of civil society, recommended secularism as state ideology which promotes human welfare by material means and makes the service of others its duty.

Secularism as a progressive ideology was a necessary qualification for a liberal, democratic, state of the post French Revolution. These connotations are applied even to a modern democratic state now. A modern state by its definition and liberal and democratic policy makes no distinction between groups, classes etc. within society, irrespective of religious affiliation. The political philosophy on the part of the state required that the state shall not impose any religion on people and did not prohibit practice of religion by a section of the people.

Thus, with secularism as an ideological goal, the proponents of this ideology consciously denounce religious orthodoxy as the basis for social organisation and advocate civil values.

The development of secularism as an ideology was partly an outcome of the process of secularisation in Europe. And in many modern states it has been adopted as a state policy, without really going through a historical process which was in evidence in Europe at the time of the emergence of the phenomenon of secularism.

Let us go back into history and see how the process of secularism developed.

12.3   THE SECULARISATION PROCESS

In this section we will discuss the process of secularisation which essentially came about as a result of the struggle for supremacy between the church and the state. The social background to this struggle in a way shaped this secularisation process too.

12.3.1 The Struggle between the Sacred and the Secular

Secularisation has occurred throughout history. Though uneven, it was discernible from the very early times. In primitive societies it was often seen that supernaturalist apprehensions and explanations were intermingled with empirical knowledge and rational techniques. Magical means were mixed with pragmatic procedures. Slowly, the process which Max Weber phrased as the 'disenchantment of the world' removed the natural phenomena of their magico-religious meaning as mean acquired more matter-of-fact and empirical and rationalistic orientations.

In fact, some sociologists see the seeds of secularisation in the very development of monotheistic conceptions religions, which rationalised and systematised the concept itmes' is of the supernatural. These monotheistic religions like Judaism and Christianity steadily extinguished random magico-religious beliefs and introduced a more, universalistic conception of an increasingly transcendental and universal deity In this process, these monotheistic religions heralded a process of systematisation or rationalisation which is an element of secularisation.

To unravel the complex factors and agencies contributing to the process of secularisation is difficult. In Western history (European history), the dissociation of religion and politics — seen in the separation of the Church and the state implies secularisation. Let us see then, how this separation came about.

12.3.2   The Church and the State

In Europe, from the very early times, the Roman Catholic Church exercised immense power in over all aspects of life.

The conversion of Emperor Constantine (306-37 AD) and socially influential classes, gave the Church an immense recognition and opportunity to enter the secular world. Emperor Constantine had established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire.

Box 1

Constantine ascribed all his successes in war to Christian God. He is said to have had a dream in which God instructed him to paint the first two letters for Christ in Greek on the shields of his soldiers. Constantine did so and consequently won the battle. It is said that he converted to Christianity after this and made Christianity the state religion. His troops then on had the Christian monogram painted on their shield.

There was also the idea that the Church was not only meant for the salvation of souls for eternity, but also had a mission for this world — to establish a kingdom of God on earth. The clergy were not only involved in other-wordly aspects of life, but were also involved in the secular life.

Later, the theology of St. Augustine and the establishment of the Benedictine order, which recommended 'useful work' sought to establish the Church in its relation with the secular world. As Weber noted, labour became an essential component of the Christian way of life.

The organisation of the Church became increasingly formalised and systematised through the development of canon law and administrative agencies. This development became particularly crucial in the background of a centralised, segmented nature of emerging feudal society. In the face of these tendencies, the Church maintained a fundamental unity.

The organisational unity combined with its involvement with secular aspects of life enabled the Church to have immense influence over the social and political life. In a highly stratified society like medieval Europe where the society was divided into aristocratic haves and the poor, the Church played little role in comdemining this highly stratified order. In fact, the Church was so interwoven with the feudal system that it became a property holder. The clergy became lords of the: land with political jurisdiction.

These circumstances gave rise to the question of where and with whom did the authority lie? With the Church or the secular state?

The kings and commoners who were equally tired of the oppressive nature of the church struggled to get rid of the control of the Church and religion from political affairs, as well as affaris of everyday world.

The forces that set themselves in opposition to the Church and its power came to be known as secular. While the struggle against the Church and the process which eventually led to the decline of religious authoritarianism replaced it with a rational and scientific outlook. This has been termed secularisation.

The secularisation of society is not just an outcome of this struggle between the Church and the state, but is related to all other facets of social change.

In our next section, let us look into the social context in which secularisation took place.

Check Your Progress I

i)   What is the literal meaning of the term secular? Use three lines for your answer.

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ii) Write five lines on the political philosophy after the French Revolution.

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iii) Who was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity? Use four lines for your answer.

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12.4   THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF SECULARISATION PROCESS

In this section, we will be discussing the various facets of social change. At the time of secularisation in Europe, the society was waking up from the medieval slumber to whole new areas of change. There was growing rational-empirical inquiry. There was Reformation in the Church and Renaissance in the arts and learning.

12.4.1 Renaissance

Between the 14th and 16th centuries, many people in Europe who could read and write began to take less notice of what their rulers and priests told them and to work out new ideas for themselves. They also became interested in the arts, and learning of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This new way of thinking and rediscovery of earlier knowledge, led to an exciting period in history known as the Renaissance, a French word meaning rebirth.

Rational enquiry was the essence of this movement and this was evident in art, architecture, music, literature etc. Renaissance period emphasised on classics as contributing to thought and learning. Renaissance was a time when people became curious about the world they lived in. Rich men built libraries and universities and with the invention of the printing machine, books .became more easily available not only to priests and scholars but also ordinary people.

By the end of the 16th century, Renaissance which started in Italy, with its awakening in learning and art spread to other parts of Europe. This was also the period which saw the growth of science.

12.4.2 Growth of Science

As we mentioned earlier, the medieval European society was characterised by the overriding influence of the church. Even learning was mostly of the religious variety. The Renaissance period saw the beginning of rational enquiry. It marked an area of description and criticism in the area of learning.

This development of detachment in observation and experimentation introduced new assumptions about the nature of the world. The rational and systematic, empirical knowledge questioned the supernatural conceptions of the world and gave an awareness to man's capacity to harness nature.

This was the period which saw the Copernican Revolution. It was generally believed that the Earth was stationary and the Sun and other heavenly bodies moved around it. Copernicus, with the help of detailed explanation demonstrated that the earth moved around a fixed sun. This findings of Copernicus shattered the very foundations on which the old world rested. The divine origins to heaven, earth and life were now being questioned.

This period also saw the growth of various disciplines of science. William Harvey discovered the circulation of blood. This led to the rethinking about the human body. In Physics, Galileo Galilei, Johannes Kepler, and subsequently Issac Newton shattered the earlier metaphysical thoughts of the universe. In short, the growth of science and the application of science reduced man's dependence on religion and the divine interpretation of the universe.

12.4.3 Expansion of Trade and Commerce

The 15th century AD also signalled a shift from the subsistent and stagnant economy to a dynamic and worldwide system. This expansion in trade was due to some extent, because of the initiative taken by the European states to develop and consolidate their economic and political power. The monarchy of Portugal Spain, Holland, and England sponsored overseas discoveries, trade and conquest

Box 2   **Secularism**

'Trade with the Orient so far was carried on land and Italian cities had a monopoly in this. In a bid to destroy this monopoly and to seek new ways of reaching the East, the Portuguese and other pioneers in navigation took to sea voyage. You must have heard of the historic voyage of Vasco da Gama, who landed on the Indian west coast in 1498. Christopher Columbus made a similar voyage in the hope of finding a sea route to India and instead reached the shores of North America.

Britain, Holland followed Spain and Portugal and soon India, South East Asia, Africa and West Indies and South America came under the economic enterprise of these countries.

European markets were flooded with new commodities, spices, textiles, tobacco, cocoa, quinine, ivory, gold, silver, and above all human slaves from Africa. One of the most important results of this expansion of trade and commerce was the growth of middle class. This class, which included merchants, bankers, shipowners, became an influential and politically powerful group.

Besides these radical changes which were taking place, there emerged a break in thought and ecclesiastical organisation, which is called 'the reformation'.

12.4.4 Reformation

In the 16th century, there was a movement within Christianity to purge the medieval abuses and to restore the doctrine and the practices that the reformers believed confirmed with the Bible. This led to a breach between the Roman Catholic Church, and the reformers whose belief and practices came to be called as Protestantism.

One of the principle initiators of this movement, Martin Luther King, questioned the practices of the Roman Catholic Church and called for a debate. The Papacy took this as a gesture of rebellion and proceeded to take steps against Luther as a heretic. Martin Luther refused to repent unless proven by Bible or clear reason. He believed that salvation was a free gift to persons through the forgiveness of sins by God's grace alone and received by them through faith in Christ. Luther was protected by kings and princes partly out of religious conviction. But mainly because they were interested to seize the Church property and to assert the imperial independence.

The obvious result of Reformation was the division of Christendom into Catholic and Protestant denominations or sects. These strengthened the growth of modern national states. Reformation introduced radical changes in thought and organization of the Church and, thus began the trend of secularisation. The Protestant conception of the divine made God personal. God thus receded to the personal relearn. Worldly personal activity was encouraged as a sign of faith in God.

As we already mentioned, there was a complex web of factors which contributed to the emergence of secularisation process. In our above discussion, we have given a few trends or happenings in a context in which secularisation occurred.

Now that we have discovered the history behind the concept and phenomenon of secularisation, let us see what it means in the contemporary world.

12.5 SECULARISATION IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD

It is true that religion has ceased to have a kind of hold that it had in the medieval society. We no longer define our world in mystical religious terms. It seems that religious institutions ceased to be central in society. But this secularisation has not occurred uniformally all over the world. We must remember that the events we described and discussed are specific to Europe and those changes had some effect on other countries. At the same time this process of secularisation does preclude the endurance of certain religiosity and emergence of new expressions of religion. The patterns of religiosity vary, and despite indicators of secularisation, spiritual survivals and new religious initiatives do occur.

Numerous new religious movements have emerged in recent decades and these may seem to be even responses to general secularisation: since they provide meaning, purpose, association, and support for a particular section of the people. Secularisation, as we said, is conspicuously a long-term historical occurrence in Western society.

Activity 1

To what extent is secularisation and secularism prevalent in India? Read newspapers and magazines, talk with other students and knowledgeable individuals before putting down your answer in your notebook.

Other religious systems did organise and systematise mystical and pagan beliefs, but they did so in different ways. Hinduism and Buddhism unlike Christianity, according to Bryan Wilson have tolerated more primitive supernaturalism than eradicating them. Besides, the long-term historical process of secularisation and the extension of rational principles to all areas of social life were less intense in non-Western countries like in Asia or the Middle East. Industrialisation and technological application to some extent rationalises and routinises framework of social life. Yet, so many religious and magical practices persist alongside, leading to paradox of magical practice alongside sophisticated industrial techniques.

The course of industrialisation has followed different paths and occurs in different forms than one which is available in the West. In our next section we will discuss the Indian experience of secularisation and secularism.

Check Your Progress II

i) .... questioned the practices of Roman Catholic Church.

ii) Match the following:

A	B
Vasco-de-Gama	Revolutionized physics
William Harvey	Sea-route to India
Copernicus	Protestantism
Martin Luther	Blood circulation

12.6 SECULARISM IN INDIA

In this section we will discuss how secularism is viewed in India and its practice. We are aware by now, that the historical process of secularisation has not occurred in India quite the way it did in Europe. But Indian situation generated its own conditions which made our national leaders feel a need for a secular ideology. Let us see how! But first let us try and understand what secularism means in India.

12.6.1 India and Secularism

India, as we all know is a home of many religions and is a multi-religious society. Religion plays an important role in the lives of Indians. Passions and hatred are whipped in the name of religion. Religious conflict and communal violence has become a part of our social scenario owing to the multi-religiosity of Indian society.

This situation puts into focus the fact that when a society has many religions the task of governance is that much more difficult.

Our leaders have responded to the situation by strengthening the values of secularism. The secular ideas are enshrined in our Constitution as well.

12.6.2 The Meaning of Secularism in India

In our preceding discussions, we have seen how secularisation in the West was a result of the secularisation process whereby the pervasive influence of religion in everyday life has lost its influence.

In India, however, secularisation and secular has been used in the context cf nature of the state. It has been conceived in this way keeping in view multi-religiosity of the society and the religious conflicts thereof. In India, the term secularism implies that the state will not identify with any one religion but is tolerant of all religious practices. As Nehru declared in 1950, "the Government of a country like India with many religions that have secured great and devoted following for generations, can never function satisfactorily in the modern age except on a secular basis".

The secular idea was adopted during the freedom struggle to unite the various communities against the colonial power. The maturing of secular concept is closely linked up with the development of nationalism during the long course of the freedom struggle. Later, the secular concepts were incorporated in the Constitution. And, for Nehru, the imperative of secularism was not only for detachement of religion in public life but progressive and modern outlook. It also meant that all the citizens enjoyed equal rights and statuses.

"Secularism, nationalism, and democracy are therefore, mutually reinforcing ideals that were sought to be emphasised by the post-colonial state in India" (Bhattacharya 190 : 178). K.M. Panikkar in explaining the content of the secular state in India stresses on this point:

"It (the secular state) eliminates from the body politics all ideas of division between individuals on the basis of its policy what Aristotle terms "distribution justice" that all communities must share as they must share the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen".

One of the consequences of such a state policy is that holding of public office and government service should not be dependent on religious affiliation.

Yet at the same time the citizens enjoy the right to freedom of religion and worship, as a fundamental right. Although the Indian Constitution speaks against any principle of religious discrimination, it cannot prevent the state to legislate in favour of any oppressed community which includes the minority community. Thus minorities enjoy a right to cultural and educational rights.

The secular idea! enshrined in our Constitution has a peculiar mix of ethnic identities and common citizenship. It tries to ensure pluralities within a democratic nation-state.

This inbuilt contradiction in our polity makes it very difficult for the secular ideal to be practiced in reality. Let us go back into history and see how the secular ideal has been adopted and the problems which besetted this concept.

Activity 2

Do you think religious parties in political arena should be banned? Give reasons for your answer. You can discuss this with others in your study centre and your councillor.

12.6.3 Secular Concept and Ideology

Prior to the British intervention in Indian politics there existed no conflict between religion and politics. In fact, as Dumont observed: 'Religion here is constitutive of society. Politics and Economics are neither autonomous domain nor are they contradictory of religion, they are simply encompassed by religion'. recalling Dumont, T N Madan feels that "religion and secular cannot be separated, in other words, religion cannot be in any meaningful sense privatised" (Madan, 1981: 12).

However, the coming of the British made some change. The British state maintained an attitude of neutrality. Further, the British introduced the concept of equality before law, irrespective of caste and creed. Alongwith this break in tradition, modern education became an important factor of change.

An important element in the political awakening in India was the growing liberalism which came with modern education. The Indian middle-class was the major beneficiary of British education and one of the first to initiate a nationalist struggle against the British.

The nationalist feeling was carried down to the masses by the extraordinary growth of the vernacular cultures. This vernacular growth at the same time was not allowed to be chauvinistic because the nation as a goal was kept in mind. "Much of the power of the Indian nationalism came from its use of forces, idioms and symbolism of religion, especially Hinduism" (Kaviraj, 190 : 195). .

The secular ideology of the national leaders by keeping religion at a distance was challenged by the likes of B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, Lajpat Rai. The Congress faced a dilemma whether to allow the mobilisation of the masses using religious symbols etc. or not, for it could alienate the Muslim community.

By 1920 the leadership of the Congress passed into the hands of Mahatma Gandhi. He openly declared the necessity of religion in politics. Although deeply rooted in Hindu popular ethos; Gandhi believed in pluralism and equal respect for all religions. Inspite of Gandhi's efforts to unite Hindus and Muslims, the excessive usage of Hindu symbols alienated the Muslims. There grew extremist tendencies both among Hindus and Muslims. Nationalism became polarised with the setting up of Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha and the militant socio-religious organisation called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).» Instead of nationalism based on territories, these communities now struggled for nation on the basis of religious identity. Sudipto Kaviraj writes: "precisely because of long familiarity with other communities identities and the relative newness of identity of nation" there was a need for creating a feeling of nationalism through various means (in this case through religion, mainly) to face the British Colonialism.

India was partitioned in 1947 into India and Pakistan amidst communal riots. In 1948 there was the tragic assassination of Gandhi. This gruesome tragedy impressed upon the Indian leaders the need for a secular ideology to keep politics and religion separate.

Check Your Progress III

i)   Write a few lines on the meaning of secularism in India.

....

....

....

....

....

ii)   .... openly declared the necessity of religion in politics.

12.7 SECULARISM IN INDIA

After Independence, Nehru took upon himself the task of modernising the country through the spread and application of science and technology for the removal of ignorance, ill health and poverty. Nehru was not against religion but he was aware of how harmful religion could be to India. Hence he lost no time in enshrining the secular ideal in the Constitution. Religion was not debarred from public life but was distanced from the State. Undoubtedly, constitutionally and legally we are a secular nation. But the question we must ask outselves is — is this secularism constitutive and an integral part of our country? We find that secular nationalism is a concept that we adopted from the West in the face of British Colonialism. The dire necessity of that time was to fight the British on a united front. Secular ideal was adopted to unite the various pluralities in the nation. Modern education and the English language helped propagate this ideal and through the vernacular it was carried to the masses. And a semblance of nationalism was forged and the British were ousted.

Pointed out to this kind of nationalism, Sudipta Kaviraj feels that "as long as the national movement faced the British, this urgency in political discourse in constantly spelling, naming, repeating the making of the nation was evident.

After independence was achieved, this ... urgency was allowed to lapse" (Kaviraj, 1990 : 198). He further adds that our leaders who inherited this nation failed to see a situation where later generations may not take this nation for granted.

The State with its elitist leaders failed to form a dialogue with various vernacular cultures (which was the case during the freedom struggle) to achieve this ideal of secularism. It remained aloof from the masses. However, it needs to be pointed out that the masses are steeped in religion with its myths legends and folklore. As such secularism would take time to fully influence social process in India, where there is a plurality of religions.

Apart from this neglect, we are faced with contradictions present in a liberal democratic systems like ours, where there is a great deal of uneven economic development. With this arose a feeling of injustice and deprivation which finds expression in various ways. Mobilising one's own community on religious and ethnic lines is very often the practice. The State political parties on the other hand address communities to gain support. This only reinforces the primordial identities of community aid religion. And they know that the only way to bring about pressure on the authorities is to mobilise on criteria like language, ethnicity and religion. So, as we can see in a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country, secularism even with best intentions is difficult to achieve.

12.8 LET US SUM UP

Unit 12: Secularism, had the basic objective of understanding the origin and the process of secularisation. The term secularism emerged out of this process of secularisation. Secularism as a state ideology has been adopted by, practically all modern states.

India, too, has adopted secularism as its state ideology. This was done keeping in view the pluralistic nature of Indian society and the consequent conflict which are there among communities. The section on secularism in India, has attempted to analyse the nature and practice of secularism. We have discussed the historical background which saw the emergence of the concept of secularism in Indian polity. In our final section, we have discussed the dynamics involved in the practice of secularism. Secularism as an ideology is indeed, difficult to practice, in a country like India where religion is deeply embedded in our society. And our democratic polity makes concessions to this religious need of the communities.

12.9 REFERENCES

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12.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

i)   The term secular is derived from the Latin word 'secular' which means the present age or generation. The word secular came to be associated with social process of secularisation later.

ii)   The new political philosophy which came about after the French Revolution questioned the religious basis of political and social organisation. It recommended rational basis for political and social organisation. Secularism was adopted as a political goal. Holyoake hoped and believed that secularism as a state ideology promotes human welfare by material means and makes the service of others its duty.

iii) Emperor Constantine (307-37 A.D.) was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity. He declared Christianity as a state religion.

Check Your Progress II

i)   Martin Luther

ii)

A	B
Vasco-da-Gama	sea-route to India
William Harvey	blood circulation
Copernicus	revolutionized physics
Martin Luther	protestantism

Check Your Progress III

i)   India did not witness the secularisation process as did Europe. As a reason secularisation did not occur naturally in India, secularism as a political goal was adopted. Specially since India is a pluralistic country with variety of religions, languages and ethnic background.

      In India, the term secularism implies that the state will not identify with any one religion but is tolerant of all religious practices.

ii)   Mahatma Gandhi

FURTHER READINGS

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GLOSSARY

Affinal: The principle of deriving relationship on the basis of marriage, such as, relation of uncle who married your mothers sister.

Agrarian Policies: Policies regarding ownership of land in the different states of India which determined who will cultivate or use the land. Here the conversion of land as private property decided by the Government left the non-private forest land areas as the property of the state. This policy adversely affected the tribal people who had traditional rights over the forests where they had lived since ages.

Agricultural Labourers: Social categories drawing livelihood mainly from selling their labour powers.

Bilateral or Cognatic: The system of descent in which a child is recognized as a descendant equally of both the father and the mother.

Brachycephalic: In terms of anthropometric measures, heads with a breadth of 80 cephalic index and over are categorised as broad or brachycephalic. Those with an index under 80, but not under 75, are classified 20 Social Structure Rural and Urban as medium heads or meso-or mesati-cephalic. Long or dolicho-cephalic heads are those heads, which have the cephalic index of below 75.

Brahmanic traditions: these traditions in the form of rituals and beliefs can be followed by any caste and are those ritual that provide supremacy to the priestly class and make them exclusive in the caste ladder.

Capitalism: An economic organisation which consists of private ownership of property, control of capital, has market mechanism and provisions of workers and which aims at making maximum profit.

Caucasian: Relating to the white race of mankind as classified according to physical features.

Cephalic Index: The proportion of the breadth of the head to its length is expressed as a percentage and it is called the cephalic index.

Collective Conscience: According to Emile Durkheim, Collective Conscience refers to the totality of belief and sentiments common to average member of society.

Commensality: Relating to those who are traditionally allowed to eat together.

Commercial and Industrial Capitalists: Owners of industrial establishment and large scale business.

Communalism: It is a term derived from the term community but it refers to a form of collective outburst where one community gets against another due to perceived differences or conflict of interests.

Consanguinity: The principle of recoginising kinship by virtue of blood relationships.

Coparacenary: Joint ownership of property amongst the male members of the family, in a patrilineal society.

Cosmology: is the science of universe.

Cultural Imperialism: It is hegemony of the first world created by culture, economy and technology over the less developed nation by deciding standardized cultural and civilizational values.

Double Unilineal: The system of descent in which the child is affiliated to the group of either parent.

Empirical: Knowledge which is based on observation and experimentation.

Endogamy: as the system of marriage within one's own caste.

Ethnicity: State of belonging to a particular group with shared culture, language and region.

Ethno-centric: This is used to describe the attitude that one's group is superior.

Exogenous: This adjective is used to describe that which originates from external causes.

Exploitation: When the poor and marginalized people have no source of livelihood to survive they are forced to work as landless labour for the mines or development projects, fields, etc. where they get minimum salaries or wages.

Fascism: A totalitarian rule where a dominant rulers rule over a nation/state/country having all the powers in his/her hands.

Gender: Attributes associated with men and women which are socially constructed, such as, men are strong, women are weak etc.

Green Revolution: Accelerated growth of food production through combination of improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticide and irrigation.

Homophobia: Dislike or prejudice against homosexual people, sex desires or relationships.

Intermediaries: Social categories between state and the actual cultivators.

Kachcha food: It is the food cooked in water.

Land Alienation: When people are banned from using the vast tracts of forest land which their tribe(s) has customarily been using since ages due to the Govt. policies, it is considered to be land alienation. People of the tribes become landless.

Landlords: Owners of estates who leased out land to others in pre-British period.

Mass Media: Commonly understood as newspapers, radio and television, these are technologies which cater to the mass audience as well as an individual. It is meant to communicate or transmit information, influence and shape large number of audience.

Matrilineal: A principle to trace descent though the female line.

Mechanical Solidarity: The condition of unity or of one-ness in a society may be based on the elements of uniformity or similarities. Such condition is described by Durkheim as mechanical solidarity.

Mediterranean: Relating to a physical type of the Caucasian race characterised

by medium or short stature, slender build, long head with cephalic index of less than 75 and dark complexion.

Modernity: The core values of modernity are freedom, critical thinking, discoveries, new ideas and experimentation where everything has to be verified and tested.

Mongoloid: A major racial stock native to Asia including peoples of northern and eastern Asia. For example, Malaysians, Chinese, Japanese, Eskimos, and often American Indians also belong to this race. In India, besides several others the Naga tribes in north east belong to this race.

Movement: Action oriented towards the development/upliftment of certain group in a society.

Negrito: A people belonging to the African branch of the black race. In India, the south Indian tribes like Kadar, the Irula, etc. are said to belong to this race.

Nordic: Relating to the germanic peoples of northern Europe and specially of Scandinavia. This is a physical type characterised by tall stature, long head, light skin and hair, and blue eyes. In India, they are found in different parts of north of the country such as Punjab and Rajputana.

Organic Solidarity: The condition of unity or one-ness in a society may arise out of differences of socio-cultural characteristics. Such unity as described by Durkheim as organic solidarity.

Orthodoxy: A doctrine which is accepted and considered true, especially in religion it is what is authoritatively prescribed.

Pakka food: It is the food cooked in oil.

Panchayati Raj: is the system of local self-government.

Patri- virilocal- The term refers to the residence of a couple after marriage with the husband's father.

Patriarchal: where the father is the main authority in the family.

Patrilineal: A principle to trace descent through the male line.

Pauperization: The process due to which Tribal people loose not only their traditional livelihood but they become poor and marginalized.

Peasant Proprietors: Cultivators with proprietary rights in land who emerged after independence.

Petty Traders and Shopkeepers: Population engaged in small business and trading.

Polytheistic: Relating to the worship of more than one god.

Profane: The elements of a social system which are not connected with religion or religious purpose. In other words, they are secular.

Professional Classes: Occupational categories involving prerequisite qualifications such as, education, training and skill. **Sharecroppers** Tenants/cultivators cultivating land on share basis.

Proselytising: Converting from one religion to another.

Protestant Ethic: A doctrine of Christianity which provided much of the cultural content of capitalism, such as, individualism achievement motivation, hostility to inherited wealth and luxury. It emphasized on work and profit, opposition to magic and superstition and commitment to rational orgnisation.

Proto-Australoid: Relating to an ethnic group including the Australian aborigines and other peoples of southern Asia and Pacific Islands, including the Ainu of Japan the Vedda of Sri Lanka. In India, the Chotanagpur tribes of Bihar called Ho and Bhil are considered to be of this race.

Purity and Pollution: It is an ideology which considers one person or object or colour ritually pure (purity) and other ritually impure and unclean (pollution).

Queer: In the context of homosexuality it is an umbrella term for sexual minorities who are not heterosexual and have peculiar same sex desires or relationships.

Rational: Thinking based on senses and not on faith. Rejecting what cannot be tested.

Redemptive Changes: The changes that are linked to reclamation of community like religious conversions.

Reformative Movements: These movements bring partial change and mostly influence values and beliefs whereas transforamatory are dense and bring larger changes.

Revolt: An act of resistance intended to bring in a change in the political system.

Revolutionary Changes: The changes in which much larger transformations take place and a complete new shift take place from the old structures.

Revolutionary Movements: These are those that bring far more radical shift in the social structure.

Revolutionary: An act on the part of a person to advocate political revolution.

Sacred: Refers to those elements of a social system which relate to religion or are set apart for the worship of deity i.e. God/Goddess.

Salvation: Saving the soul from sins and getting admission to heaven as a consequence of this.

Sanskritisation: is according to Srinivas a complex and heterogenous process that involves many concepts within it. The social and cultural process where lower castes imitate the higher ones or lets say 'twice-born (dwija) caste' in the hierarchy by following their customs, rituals, food and dress, is called Sanskritization. It is a social process to bring about Social mobility of caste groups where lower castes adopts the ways of the higher to acquire higher status in the society.

Secularism: It is an ideology introduced during the French Revolution. As a political philosophy on the part of the state it required that the state shall not impose any religion on as a state policy. However it did not prohibit practice of any religion on part of any section of its people.

Sex: Biological differences between men and women.

Social Classes: Social categories differentiated and hierarchically ranked in terms of primarily income, wealth and assets.

Social exclusion: When a community is excluded from the existing social order or do not enjoy the same status in society as others.

Tenants: Cultivators holding land from owners on some tenure.

Tribe: A group of people with shared culture, language, history and definite territory.

Twice-born: Generally the upper castes like Brahmins, Kshtriyas and Vaishyas who had to undergo an 'upnayan ceremony' and were supposed to wear the sacred thread which elevated them to the status of turce form'. It meant that a person (male) has had not only a physical birth but also a spiritual birth.

Unilineal: The system of descent in which relationship with the ancestor is recognized in one line only, i.e., either of father or of mother.

Western Brachycephals: They have been divided into three types:

i)   The **Alpenoid** is characterised by broad head with rounded occiput (the back part of the head or skull) prominent nose, medium stature, round face. Skin colour is light; hair on face and body is abundant, body is thickly set. This type is found among the Bania of Gujarat, the Kathi of Kathiawar, the Kayastha of Bengal etc.

ii) Amongst the **Dinaric** people, the head is broad with rounded occiput and high vault; nose is very long, stature is tall, face is long, forehead is receding; skin colour is darker, eyes and hair are also dark. This type is represented in Bengal, Orissa and Coorg. The Brahmin of Bengal and the Kanarese Brahmin of Mysore are also some of the representatives.

iii) The **Armenoid** is in most of the characters like the Dinaric. In the former, the shape of occiput is more marked and the nose is more prominent and narrow. The Parsi of Bombay show typical Armenoid characteristics.

Westernisation: is the process of the adoption of the western lifestyle and values, especially of the Britishers

Working Class: Those who work in the industries.

Zamindars: Owners of estate, created due to the introduction of Permanent Settlement in 1793 in certain regions of India. However, the word Zamindar is used in different senses in different regions of India.