

# Social Structure and Social Change

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DSOC201



**L** OVELY  
**P** ROFESSIONAL  
**U** NIVERSITY

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**SOCIAL STRUCTURE  
AND  
SOCIAL CHANGE**

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## SYLLABUS

### Social Structure and Social Change

#### Objectives

1. To familiarize the students about the Structural aspects of Sociology.
2. To make students understand how economic factors and demographic change are causing significant social change in various societies.

Sr. No.	Topics
1.	<b>Indian Society:</b> Unity and diversity in India; Religious, Linguistic, Cultural and Regional diversities of Indian society; Evolution of Indian society- socio-cultural dimensions
2.	<b>Major Segments of Indian Society:</b> Tribal life in India, Village and urban communities in India
3.	<b>Marriage, Family and Kinship:</b> Forms of Marriage, Family and Kinship among Hindus, Muslims and Christians and their changing trends; Decline of joint family: causes and consequences
4.	<b>Caste system in India:</b> Characteristics, Power Dimensions of Caste in India, Pollution and Purity, Dominant Caste, Inter-Caste Relations, Jajmani system, Changing trends and Future of caste system
5.	<b>Status of Women:</b> Gender discrimination, violence against women, quest for equality, changing status of women
6.	<b>Social Change:</b> Meaning, nature and forms of social change- Evolution, Progress, Diffusion, Transformation, Revolution
7.	<b>Theories of Social Change:</b> Linear, cyclical and curvilinear
8.	<b>Processes of Change:</b> Change in structure and change of structure, Sanskritisation, Westernisation, Modernisation, Secularization and globalisation
9.	<b>Factors of Social Change:</b> Demographic, economic, religious, technological bio-tech, info-tech and media
10.	<b>Social Change in Contemporary India:</b> Trends of change , Economic development and social change- Industrialisation, urbanisation

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## Unit 1: Indian Society

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Objectives

Introduction

- 1.1 Unity in Diversity in India
- 1.2 Cultural and Regional Diversities of Indian Society
- 1.3 Evolution of Indian Society: Socio-Cultural Dimensions
- 1.4 Socio-cultural Dynamics through the Ages
- 1.5 Impact of Modern West on Indian Society
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Key-Words
- 1.8 Review Questions
- 1.9 Further Readings

### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand Unity in Diversity in India.
- Explain Cultural and Regional diversities of Indian Society.
- Discuss the evolution of Indian Society Socio-cultural dimensions.

### Introduction

India is a country of many ethnic groups, over 1,650 spoken languages, dialects, regional variations—a land of myriad tongues—numerous modes of apparel and countless mannerisms. For the most part, the continental size of the country accounts for the variations and diversities. Besides, there are many religions, sects and beliefs. At times the wide differences seem to predominate, and the resultant disharmony is regarded by many as irremediable, a phenomenon that the 100 crore people (ours is the second most populous country) have to live with, whether they like it or not. The cynics even regard the Indian people as quarrelsome, often at each other's throat, denouncing others as if they were inveterate enemies holding irreconcilable ideas and subscribing to ideals totally different from theirs.

But those who stick to this impression ignore a vital factor there is a basic unity which runs through the Indian mainstream of life and thought. There is a traditional culture which is truly oriental and which conforms to the teachings and precepts of our saints and sages. Culture and civilisation are admittedly difficult to define, though both these signify certain identifiable trends and traits of character, especially restraint, consideration for others and a high degree of tolerance. The lack of culture becomes evident even from the language and the dialect one uses, the conduct and manner of living, one's gestures in social life, the tendency to have a closed mind, with doors and windows shut as if to disallow the inflow of fresh ideas and other viewpoints.

Every process of exclusion betrays lack of culture, just as every trend indicating a willingness to broaden one's outlook shows a commendable cultural trait. The same idea is often put in different words: static culture envisages decay, just as dynamism ensures survival.

It is the dynamism and the flexibility that have enabled Indian culture to survive despite its many diversities and heavy odds. Through these diversities runs a common stream, as it were, and the



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similarity and unity of outlook can be noticed from North to South and East to West. Indian culture is actually a continuous synthesis, and has absorbed many external influences in the course of history. A significant recognition of the fusion of cultural trends comes through the Constitution (Article 51-A), which says, inter alia, that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

Among the other Fundamental Duties mentioned in that Article is “to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India, transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities, to renounce practices derogatory to women...” All these are indicative of cultural development. Calm reflection will show that attempts to enforce complete unity and disallow any differences of thought and approach in a large country like India would prove counter-productive and self-defeating. People can hold different views on life, religion, social, economic and political systems and yet they can be cultured. Who, can deny that the people of India have throughout history honoured saints, sages, religious preachers and philosophers, seldom showing veneration for military heroes, triumphant warriors and commanders, except transitory praise and adulation. Those who have fought for cultural freedoms and political independence, which ensures such freedom and the implicit liberties to pursue cultural pursuits, have commanded large and loyal following. Had it not been for the tolerance shown by the people of India during the rule of the Mughals and other outsiders, who brought in their own traditions and sought to impose them on this country, the amorphous, flexible Indian culture would have lost its moorings. The Indian mind has assimilated much of the thinking of other cultures, thus enriching itself and making itself durable and virtually indestructible. The Western concepts and modes of dress, the English language, the study of English classics and European philosophers’ works, even though they emphasised thoughts and beliefs different from those of the Indian people, have not been spurned. Rather, a good part of these has become almost a part of the Indian way of living and thinking, especially in the urban areas. The English-knowing elite exist alongside the Indian language enthusiasts, without tensions. The Western culture has always laid stress on materialism, while the Eastern, especially Indian, culture has been closely linked with spiritualism, simplicity, filial duty and affection, austerity, tolerance and harmony. Both are tolerated in this country. It is, however, a pity that in recent years the communal clashes, the increasing evidence of intolerance and disharmony, the apparently endless discord, the open clashes at public meetings, and the all-too-frequent denunciation of each other have increased so much as to indicate that the people are forgetting their, true culture, and are allowing themselves to be exploited by selfish, uncultured people who seek to disrupt and destroy rather than build and consolidate.

The real strength of Indian culture lies in basic unity, vigour and the ability to contain an amazing diversity within itself. In this country there are people who belong to opposite schools of thought and who never seem to agree on anything. And yet, the concepts of one basic culture and one nation have continued. Another notable characteristic of Indian culture is that it has always been based on moral and religious values; on these values the outlook shows an amazing similarity, almost throughout the country. Of course, there are groups which seem to be always on the war-path, and there are dissidents who question the basic framework on which the Indian polity is based, but they constitute a very small fraction of the total population. Moreover, in every large country there are always people who are virtual rebels in thought and deed, and who wish to demolish rather than construct. Even in the advanced countries, such as the U.S.A., there are people who are outside the pale of law, who do not subscribe to the distinct American way of life. The same holds good of the British people. Some Britons are opposed to the centuries old institution of monarchy and regard it as superfluous and an anachronism in the modern age of democracy. But they are as loyal to their country as the others, and they not only stick to the British culture, but are proud of it.

India is a secular State, and the people, with a few exceptions, have reverence for every faith; there is no effort to impose one religion on other. The Constitution itself, framed with the full consent of the people, guarantees the freedom of thought and expression. The Constitution does not recognise distinctions based on religion, sex or caste, or any other factor. Modernism co-exists

with orthodoxy, as does progressive thought with conservatism, and even reactionary trends. The broad features of the Hindu culture, (which is not linked to the Hindu religion but is broadly Indian culture). It is not fixed or static but is constantly adapting itself to changed conditions, thus responding favourably to new challenges; tolerance of conflicting beliefs, liberalism and broadmindedness; emphasis on ethical conduct and spiritualism; control of passions and temper; justice and truth, and disdain of wealth and the pleasures of the senses.

Spiritual perfection is eagerly sought and preached; moral principles, duty and “dharma” are assiduously propagated, especially at pilgrim centers. Indian culture, in fact, represents a synthesis on many strains. It contains the best features of many traditions of other lands. Undoubtedly, certain corrupt influences and distortions have crept in, but these aberrations have not affected the basis, which is solid, not shaky in any sense. Absorption and assimilation have been responsible for the lasting qualities of Indian culture; the diversities seem to disappear in course of time, leaving behind the basic beliefs very much intact. Mahatma Gandhi’s view that veneration for other faiths is a part of our own system holds well because of the recognition that each religion has truth and honesty as its basis. Most people have a wide, universal outlook. All these factors account for the unity in diversity that is an outstanding feature of this country. It is often said that there is unity in diversity in India. The people of India are united with a common cultural heritage have a feeling of unity in spite of having external differences. From ancient times it is been seen that India is divided into various castes, creed , religions, regions but then too they are united as one whole nation. Nothing in the past have made them broken into pieces. It is an whole of a nation with a huge population , and will remain united in whatever condition they may put to.

India is a land of diverse physical features. There are snow capped mountains, hilly terrains, plains, plateaus, and coastal areas. There are deserts and places with extreme and scanty rainfall. There are regions with extreme and moderate climate. People of India follow different religions and castes. They follow different customs, traditions and speak different languages. They also differ in dress and food, inspite of so many differences; people have a feeling of oneness they are bound by common cultural heritage and they share basic human values. When Indians go abroad, they call themselves Indians and they are known as Indians. Indian culture is dynamic and tolerant. Indian culture is more varied and richer. Though the foreign cultures retained their basic character, they became a part of the Indian culture with the passage of time. The diversity of the Indians contributes to the variety and richness of Indian culture and strengthens national unity.

But intolerance and narrow mindedness may weaken national unity. We should therefore create conditions in which people should become conscious of the similarities which make them Indians rather than the dissimilarities which distinguish them from others. People must be encouraged to feel proud of India’s cultural heritage, of being called Indians while retaining their distinct features. India is a live example to the world to show them that they have Unity In Diversity. This country not only remains together in an emergency but also they remain together in natural calamities such as famines, floods and earthquakes. This country has become quite inspirational for the countries who have heavily been divided racially.

## **1.1 Unity in Diversity in India**

India is the seventh largest and the second most populous nation of the world occupying 2.4 per cent of the total world area. It contains about 15.0 per cent of the world’s population living in a variety of social, economic, geographical and ecological conditions. It has a long history spanning over five thousand years of human habitation—3,000 years before Christ and 2,000 years after Christ. It has a cultural heritage handed down by the immigrant Aryans from across the Himalayas, the native Dravidians, and the invading civilizations. Its social, economic and cultural diversities are also reflected in habitat conditions in rural, urban and semi-urban areas. Its total urban population of 217.18 million (1991 census) or even the total population of four metropolis (Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta) exceeds the total population of most of the developing nations. There are settlements with just 1,000 people and also settlements with 10 million people.



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### The Nature of Diversities

The diversity runs through various races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies, and ideologies. Broadly speaking, the diversities are found in the following areas:


#### Languages

Though the Constitution of India has recognized eighteen major languages (including three languages recognized in August, 1992) but as many as 1,652 languages and dialects are spoken in our country. Broadly, these languages belong to three families of languages: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, and European. The Indo-Aryan languages include Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi, Bihari, Rajasthani, Assamese, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Kashmiri languages covering about three-fourths of India's population. The Dravidian languages include Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. The European languages include English, Portuguese, and French. The last two languages are mostly spoken by people in Goa and Pondicherry.

Hindi is the official language of India and English is an associate language. According to 1991 figures, Hindi is spoken by the highest number of people (247.85 million), followed by Telugu (72.08 million), Bengali (71.78 million), Marathi (67.26 million), Tamil (60.60 million), Urdu (46.11 million), Gujarati (41.37 million), Malayalam (35.32 million), Kannada (34.78 million), Oriya (31.79 million), Bhojpuri (23.11 million) and Punjabi (22.41 million). The rest of the languages are spoken by one million to twenty million each. Some states were even created after independence on the language basis, e.g., Punjab was divided in Punjab and Haryana, and Maharashtra was divided in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Some states like Mizoram and Nagaland were created on cultural basis.

#### Religions

Though India has no state religion, yet the state guarantees the freedom of following and practicing all religious faiths. Among the major religions are: Hinduism (practised, according to 1991 census figures, by 697.4 million people including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, or 82.6 per cent of the country's total population), Islam (practised by 95.8 million people or 11.35 per cent of the country's population), Christianity (practised by 20.5 million people or 2.43 per cent of the total population), Sikhism (practised by 16.5 million people or 1.96 per cent of the total population), Buddhism (practised by 5.9 million people on 0.71 per cent of the total population), Jainism (practised by 4.1 million people or 0.48 per cent of the total population) and others (practised by 3.5 million people or 0.3 per cent of the total population).



*Did u know?* Christianity came to India through Portuguese occupation of Goa, Daman and Diu in the sixteenth century and later on through the Britishers in the seventeenth century.

Hinduism advocates the doctrines of *karma* (doing one's duties), *dharma*, rebirth (man takes 84,000 births, depending upon good and bad deeds of his life), immortality of soul (soul never dies), renunciation, and *moksha* (freedom from the cycle of births and deaths).


Islam came to India along with the Muslim invasions. It is strictly a monotheistic religion which professes the fatalistic acceptance" of *Allah's* (God's) will. It docs not believe in idol worship. It considers Prophet Mohammed as the greatest prophet and the Quran as the most sacred book. It prescribes five duties as the primary duties of a devout Muslim: belief in *Allah*, prayers five times a day, the giving of alms, a month's fast every year, and a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.

Sikhism emerged in the fifteenth century. Its founder Guru Nanak and the later nine Gurus who followed him preached against the hypocrisy in religion. The religious symbols of Sikhism are five 'Ks': *kesh* (hair), *kangha* (comb), *kara* (bracelet), *kirpan* (sword), and *kachha* (shorts).

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India fought for political freedom as one unified entity. After independence, it faced an attack of China and three attacks of Pakistan as one nation. Our economic, social and political philosophies are broadly based on equality, justice, liberty rationality and secularism.

The unity among Hindus is also found in commonly following the prohibitions of the caste system and so forth.



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Our laws apply to all people without any discrimination. The Constitution provides guarantee to all people alike. The planning aims at the uplift of all types of weaker sections. The common customs and consensus in social values have preserved our traditional culture.

Similarly, people may say that they live in a particular region, but the idea of region is contextual. Within one region, there are smaller and more homogeneous areas which differ from each other in many ways. A linguistic area thus possesses a 'vertical' unity which is common to all castes living there (from Brahmins to the untouchables), while caste represented a 'horizontal' unity which cuts across a linguistic area. A Brahmin in one state say, Uttar Pradesh, may not share values with a local *dalit* (Bhangi, Pasi, etc.), but he shares some cultural values with Brahmins everywhere in India, from north to south and east to west. Also, people may speak different languages in different regions but they have common languages of English and Hindi to communicate with each other. Hindi has made good progress in the non-Hindi areas and it has come to be accepted as the medium of communication for people in different states. Earlier, English played this role as medium of communication for intellectuals from all parts of India, though it created a barrier between the learned people and the ordinary folk. The concept of a linguistic state and using regional languages as medium of teaching in schools, colleges and universities are the product of independence. But it is doubtful that language differences will create chaos in the society.

The caste system also has provided a common cultural ideology to Indians. Though it is true that caste has created inter-caste conflicts and has also created a major social problem of untouchability and has brought a rift between the higher and the untouchable castes, but it is also true that the *jajmani* system till recently had succeeded in maintaining harmony and co-operation among various castes in the rural areas. A significant change has taken place in the power relations of different castes in the last few decades. The economic forces and the political and social changes in the last forty-six years have vastly increased the power of the numerically large castes. The leaders of these castes are aware of the strategic position they occupy in the struggle for political power at the local, regional and central levels. It is these castes which take up big issues like uplift of position of weaker sections, untouchability issue, land-reforms issue, and so forth. This caste unity, to some extent, becomes crucial in taking up regional and national issues and thus indirectly contributes to the process of nation's development. Thus, religion, caste and language may create some problems in the society yet the idea of the unity of India has its origin in these three areas. These bind people together closely at different levels. Though it is not being claimed that these three factors will be crucially important in integrating the in-habitants of India, but it is being suggested that in the course of time people will come to appreciate the idea that members of every religion, caste, and linguistic group are equal as citizens. This would generate tolerance and promote secularism as a value.

The 'divisions' in the country may be dysfunctional but their values may not necessarily be inconsistent with being a citizen of India. The disappearance of loyalties to these divisions may not be feasible but they need not be perceived and denounced as anti-national. If an individual thinks that he belongs to certain caste, village, region and religion, he also thinks that he is an Indian and as a citizen, he has certain responsibilities and duties to perform. Such feelings alone maintain unity at a higher level among the individuals and keep the society integrated. Such a concept of unity need not make people afraid of diversities in the society.

## 1.2 Cultural and Regional Diversities of Indian Society

The most important aspect of culture in India has been religious diversity. For long India has been the home of followers of all major religions of the world - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Bahaism. Hinduism and all the religions faiths mentioned above have coexisted together for more than two thousand years within a shared cultural space. These religious systems may be classed as:

1. Indic or Indigenous
2. Extra-Indic

The Indic religions have originated and evolved in India. The Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism may be described as Indie religions - Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism have evolved from early Hinduism which has been undergoing changes in content and ritual practices in response to the prevailing cultural, ethno-lingual and ecological diversities in different regions of the country. These religions may also be described as protest movements within Hinduism which has also led to reform within Hinduism. Religions and faiths which originated outside India such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism may be put in the second category. While Judaism, Christianity and Islam originated in West Asia, Zoroastrianism and Bahaism originated in Iran.

Although religion is largely a matter of personal faith, religious identity of an individual in India is often expressed at the social plane. On a number of occasions such as mass festivals or rituals one finds manifestation of religious identities. Faith of different religions also exhibit a 'community feeling' leaving to conscious or unconscious expression of solidarity. Moreover, common code of social conduct based on a religious faith also leads to a public expression of a particular religious identity, that is, a dress pattern, avoidance of certain items of food and several others with some regional variations.

### Hinduism and the Hindus

The plurality of religions in India is often obscured by the fact that Hinduism is generally regarded as both the demographically dominant and culturally characteristic - even hegemonic - religion of the country not only in popular imagination but also factually. Four out of every five Indians are Hindus. "From the cultural perspective, anthropologists and sociologists have provided details of the many components of culture and aspects of social structure of the so called non-Hindu communities that have either been borrowed from the Hindus, or are survivals from their pre-conversion Hindu past, with or without significant alterations" (T.N. Madan, 2003). Unlike the other religions of India, Hinduism is a federation of faiths, rather than a single homogenous religion. In fact, Hinduism has been evolving through the ages. It also contains several sects such as *Saivite* and *Vaishnavite*.

Hindus are numerically predominant everywhere; they constitute about 82 per cent of the total population of the country. However, in the peripheral areas Hindus are outnumbered by the Muslims (e.g. Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep), by the Sikhs (i.e. Punjab), by Christians (e.g. Mizoram, Nagaland) and Buddhists (e.g. Arunachal Pradesh). In some regions of the country, such as parts of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, Hindus account for more than 97 per cent of the total population. The proportion of Hindu population is equally high - above 95 per cent - in the sub-Himalayan districts of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

The proportion of Hindus in the remaining population remains well above 90 per cent in eastern Madhya Pradesh, eastern Gujarat, southern Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and coastal Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, in some districts along the west coast Hindu percentages are significantly low - below 70 per cent. Similarly, in the tribal areas of the northeast, such as Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram, their population is less than 20 per cent and in some cases even less than 5 per cent.

The Hindu proportion is higher in the rural segment of the population - the national average being 84 per cent - thus revealing the predominantly rural character of Hindu population. As against this, the proportion of Hindus in the urban population is around 76 per cent. Two-fifths of the Hindu population lives in the Hindi speaking northern states (viz., Haryana, Delhi, Uttar

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Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh). The two states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar alone account for more than 27 per cent of the country's Hindu population. Likewise the four southern states accommodate one-fourth of the Hindu population.

### The Buddhists

This is the most widely spread religion in Asia today but it is a minority religion in India, the country of its' origin.

The Buddhists constitute 0.76 per cent of the country's population. Traditionally, the Buddhists are mainly located in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. In terms of absolute numbers the bulk of Buddhist population today lives in Maharashtra (as much as 79 per cent). These Neo-Buddhists are converts from Hindu lower castes, initiated into Buddhism by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In several districts of Maharashtra, these Neo-Buddhists account for 5-17 per cent of the population. "The presence of the Dalai Lama and settlements of refugees in India since then-exile from Tibet in 1959, has enhanced general awareness about Buddhism in its different expressions of doctrine and practice in India. The conversion of large number of low-caste Hindus, who call themselves Dalits (the oppressed) and are generally referred to as Neo-Buddhists, under the charismatic leadership of B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), has contributed significantly to the same process. It has, however, explicitly politicized Buddhist identity" (T.N. Madan, *ibid*).

### The Jains

Another offshoot of early Hinduism, a protest movement, is Jainism whose followers are known as the Jains. They constitute 0.40 per cent of the total population of the country. About 60 per cent of the country's 3.27 million Jains live in the three states of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The Jain population is largely concentrated in the urban centres of these three states as well as in the neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Their concentration in urban centres may be explained by the fact that they are largely a trading community. Even in the three states mentioned above - showing their largest concentration - the proportion of Jains in the population is significant. They account for just 1.28 per cent of the total population in Rajasthan, 1.22 per cent in Maharashtra and 1.19 per cent in Gujarat. As against this their proportion in the urban population of these states is comparatively higher - 3.4 per cent in Rajasthan, 3.5 per cent in Maharashtra and 2.6 per cent in Gujarat. "The Jains have favoured their concentration in the dry regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The two districts in which their share is the highest in urban population are Barmer (13.4 per cent) and Jalor (10.5 per cent)" (Aijazuddin Ahmed, 1999). Elsewhere in India they are conspicuous by their absence.

### Religious Pluralism as Ideology

Religious pluralism in India is not merely a narrative of cultural diversity and pluralism but may also be seen as ideology. In a significant writing of great scholarly merit T.N. Madan (2003) says that contemporary ideologies of secularism often claims that pluralism is as old as the oldest Veda. It is recalled that the Rigveda proclaims that 'the Absolute is one, although the sages have given it different names'. Hinduism tolerates differences by incorporating and hierarchizing it.

However, conflict has not been altogether absent. In modern, times, the Bengali mystic, Rama Krishna (1836-86) and his renowned disciple Vivekanand (1863-1902) are credited with promoting the ideology of religious pluralism by word and deed though he was sometimes critical of Buddhism and Christianity. In the twentieth century Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) put forward the most explicit formulation of religious pluralism and announced that 'the world as a whole will never have and need not have a single religion'. By acknowledging his indebtedness to Christianity and Islam, Gandhi implied that Hinduism could be enriched by incorporating in it some of the truths discovered by other religions. "A careful reader of the holy book of Islam will find many passages on which an ideology of religious pluralism can be based. To give but one example: *"To you your religion, and to me mine"* (T.N. Madan, *ibid*). In the twentieth century, the most celebrated effort to argue for religious pluralism on the basis of the Quran itself was made by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a profound scholar of religion and distinguished political leader. The task of developing a

well argued ideology of religious pluralism on the basis of the religions of India awaits serious and competent attention. The emergence of state sponsored religious pluralism, summed up in the slogan "*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*" (equal respect for all religions) and presented as Indian (in contrast to western) secularism is a case in point. "Contrary to the assumption of many modernists that religious faith is necessarily exclusive and therefore results in communal conflict, there is considerable historical and ethnographical evidence that the common people of India, irrespective of individual religious identity, have long been comfortable with religious plurality..... Needless to emphasize, the two pluralisms - the people's and the intellectual's - are different in several crucial respects. For example, and most notably, the former is wholly spontaneous -the lived social reality - but the latter is ideological, and, in that sense, self-conscious or constructed." Even otherwise the relationship between Religion, Civil Society and the State form the three dimensions of modern reality.



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Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are all considered inferior varieties of Hinduism.

In any narration of religions and religious communities in India the lesser known and lesser studied are Islam, Christianity and Sikhism as religious ideologies and their followers as religious communities. Hence, they have been dealt with in more details in an exclusive chapter on 'Religious Minorities'. There is hardly any Jew population left in India, Parsees or Zoroastrians being a microscopic minorities and Bahais being too defused have been left out from this narration.

### Religious Conversions

The issue of religious conversion in India has always been a highly emotive issue. Simply stated, conversion may be a process including a personal decision, taken alone or as part of a group to enter into another religion or religious system other than one in which one is born. Conversion has been opposed from various perspectives: historical, sociological and psychological. Factors preceding conversion include socio-political upheavals, psychic factors of anguish, turmoil, despair, conflict, guilt and self-realization. In the Indian context, religious conversion has taken place mainly from Hinduism to other religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism and also within the larger universe of Hinduism, that is, from one Hindu sect to the other. As far as the conversion from Hinduism to Islam, Christianity and Buddhism is concerned it is largely from the lower Hindu castes - mainly untouchable castes. Obviously this was the result of the highly oppressive and exploitative caste system and the lower Hindu castes found conversion to Islam and Christianity as emancipatory movements. Moreover, conversion of Dalits empowered them socially, politically and ideologically.

The Christian missions have been the main agency of religious conversions but their appeal was addressed more directly to untouchables. "However, it would be untrue to think that the missionaries who arrived in India were fired by sentiments of social justice and equality. On the contrary, they quickly realised that if they were to show too much interest in the lower castes, they were liable to be assimilated to these groups and find themselves totally cut off from the majority of the population. The first missionaries therefore concentrated on the higher castes" (Robert Deliege, 1999). But high caste people were particularly resistant and reticent; in the end, the missionaries encountered a more favourable reception among the lower castes, and throughout India an impressive number of untouchables swelled the Christian ranks. Talking about the response of the dalit converts, Deliege (ibid) comments that the Vellars of south India were promoted by the Catholic church to the rank of priestly caste within Catholicism. But the caste barriers were reinforced, and the untouchables who had joined the church found themselves marginalized: the Nadars, for example, would not allow Paraiyars in their Chapel. Thus, Catholic untouchables found themselves very bitter. They stress the contempt shown by most religious authorities and invariably say that it was no use becoming Christians. Their knowledge of religion is very limited



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as well. It is, therefore, not surprising that some do not hesitate to reconvert to Hinduism in order to be put back on the scheduled castes lists. The faith of the majority, however, is too deeply rooted for them to change religions. The Protestant church was particularly active in Punjab. The Churhas, perhaps the largest untouchable caste in Punjab, were particularly attracted towards Christianity. But these conversions did not fundamentally affect the material life and social status of these converted dalits while their counterparts as scheduled castes often improved their socio-economic position.

The maintenance of social inequalities even after conversion has been a matter of curiosity to many. As Rowena Robinson (2001) rightly points out: "In contradiction to the popular understanding which is unable to come to terms with how an egalitarian condones inequalities, it may be pointed out that the Christian missionaries have not always and everywhere unequivocally opposed castes or all its implicated distinctions..... Converts themselves often resisted any missionary efforts to establish egalitarian relations, the higher castes defending the maintenance of status distinctions. Groups that converted in the mass movements may have hoped to gain a measure of freedom from the oppressive structures of caste. Whether due to lack of serious missionary initiative or due to high caste opposition within the community, this hope was not fully realised". In Kerala, the converts from untouchable groups such as the Pulayas and Parayas are largely landless labour and work for Syrian Christians and other landed castes. There is no question of interdining or intermarriage between the Syrians and the untouchable converts. In many cases, the latter worship in their own churches. In rural Tamil Nadu, untouchable converts often remain residently segregated from the higher castes. Idea of purity and impurity persists.

Conversion of dalits into Islam has become a thing of the past. Historically speaking, most of the conversion of the dalits to Islam occurred during medieval and colonial periods and that is why we find that the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population in India comes from the lower Hindu castes including untouchable castes. Conversions to Islam not only gave them emancipation from a number of social and economic disabilities but also empowered them politically. Significantly, most of the Muslim rulers were not interested in conversion of lower castes and Indian Islam did not have missionary like agencies for organized conversion yet the ranks of the Muslim society were swelled by the lower Hindu castes who found Islam, socially and politically, an emancipatory ideology. Like Christianity, even Islam did not or could not, eliminate caste/status distinctions. After independence the first mass conversion to Islam was reported from Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts in Tamil Nadu in the early 1980s. The local caste clashes between Thevars and Pallars played a major role in these conversions and Meenakshipuram became the boiling point. It was strongly political in nature and can be seen as the 'protest' of the local untouchables against the tyranny of the local dominant caste. These conversions to Islam provoked a strong outcry among many Hindus. Several ministers, politicians, *gurus*, persons from various walks of life were sent in not only to stop this trend but also to bring the 'stray sheep' back to the fold. Thus, conversion to Islam became a strong emotive issue among the vast segments of Hindus. The local Muslim community seems to have accepted the converts, but it is too early to assess the true impact of conversion on the Pallar's lives. The prevailing socio-political conditions in post-independence India makes it highly unlikely that there will be any more mass movements of dalits to Islam and in all probability Meenakshipuram will remain an isolated case. Moreover, Meenakshipuram is largely a symbol of the dalits' quests for equality and emancipation, *not* a Muslim challenge to Hindu India. Hinduism has, through the ages, shown tremendous capacity for regeneration and there is no reason to assume that it will fail to rise to the occasion this time. Let the reform movement in the Hindu society assert itself and allow more socio-political space to the dalits. Religion is such a high value in the life of Indian people that nobody changes it on flimsy grounds.

If we take a close look at the Indian society today it is not a very serious sociological problem. The process of modernization and secularization are having an impact on Indian society structurally and culturally. Moreover, with the adoption of the policy of 'protective discrimination' for the backward segments viz. Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, conversion as a means of gaining social mobility has lost its appeal. Conversion to Buddhism is



now the only strong trend but it does not threaten the social harmony. Moreover the neo-Buddhists like converted Sikhs continue to enjoy all the benefits meant for Scheduled Castes. This, further rules out the possibilities of any dalit conversions to Islam and Christianity. If in some stray cases, some dalits, continue to embrace these religions despite these deterrents, it may be taken as a matter of faith and freedom of conscience which the constitutions guarantees them.

### Inter-religious Interaction and its Manifestation

Close socio-cultural interaction between different religious communities would never have been possible without the spirit of religious accommodation between such communities. There have been different perceptions of social realities in terms of inter-religious interaction and its manifestation. While one group of people perceive a situation where inter-religious conflicts have worsened and threaten to tear the social fabric of India. They perceive this situation in the face of growing communal conflicts and violence. The other group of people have a different perception. They look at this phenomenon as an 'elite concern' of mainly the urban populace because the communal violence is largely an urban phenomenon: Even in the urban centres, the toiling masses are still not involved actively in such conflicts. They maintain lot of social, economic and cultural sharing. Perhaps, that is why, it is said that communalism in India is largely the problem of 'urban educated middle class'. People in the urban slums and vast multitude of rural masses live in socio-economic and cultural symbiosis. These marginalized people share the agonies of human exploitation. "That they become the centres of worst communal conflagrations during the riots is an altogether different political issue - these do not surface due to religious differences but built up manipulations - mainly political-economic in nature" (J.J. Roy Burman, 2002).

One of the most important manifestations of inter-religious interaction may be explained through the concept of 'syncretism' which is an age old social fact. Unfortunately it received little attention in sociology and cultural anthropology. "Syncretism refers to the hybridization or amalgamation of two or more cultural traditions. Anthropology shares the concept of syncretism with scholars of comparative religion who have used the term at least since the early 1600s (often disparagingly to condemn the adulteration of true Christian belief). Theologians continue to apply the term to religious systems" (Lamout Lindstorm, 1996). Syncretism is a general feature of the development of religious and cultural systems overtime, as they absorb and reinterpret elements drawn from other traditions with which they are in contact. The term is, however, particularly employed to refer to situations of culture contact which generate religious systems which are mixture of two or more systems of beliefs and practices. It may be understood in terms of reconciliation of, or attempts to reconcile, different system of belief. Here the concept of eclectic religion may also be brought out which conveys the meaning of religions, which are the result of synthesis of several religions. This is possible only on the basis of mutual acceptance of elements of two religions.

Inter-religious interaction and its manifestation may also be seen in terms of Little and Great Traditions. The Great Traditions of a religion, largely textual, contained in sacred scriptures and epics may not be showing much sharing to the common masses but the sharing of Little Traditions which are local in nature are more important for the students of sociology and anthropology. The vast multitude of masses, especially rural masses, largely live by their Little Traditions.

If we look at the inter-religious interaction, the study of religious groups may be seen in the context of the regional synthesis of identities. The regions present an example of remarkable cultural synthesis where the people belonging to different religious faiths, castes and ethnic formations have been united together by a common cultural tradition specific to the region. "It is this cultural tradition which places a distinctive stamp on their identity. Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs have all been cast in regional moulds. It is in the personality of the region that their roots lie and of which they are an inseparable past. To visualize them simply as elements of demographic composition will be distortion of the social reality" (Aijazuddin Ahmed, 1999). A remarkable survey, *People's of India Project*, conducted by Anthropological Survey of India recently, revealed that people of a region irrespective of their caste and religious variations share 88 per cent elements of their common culture.

### **1.3 Evolution of Indian Society: Socio-Cultural Dimensions**

Rural people, whose main occupation is agriculture, are more close to nature, have close personal ties of kinship and friendship, and lay stress on tradition, consensus, and informality. The density of population in villages is so low that it not only affects production and distribution but also the total life of the community and peoples' living standard. Both birth rate and death rate are high in villages in comparison to cities which adversely affects the quantitative and the qualitative growth of the rural people. Another aspect of the life of rural people which requires study is their distribution in age and sex groups. About 45 per cent of rural people belong to productive age (15-59) and about 55 per cent are sustained by working people (*Manpower Profile, India, 1998:135*). The preponderance of children (14 -) and the aged (60 +) considerably influences the economic and the social life of the working section of the people. Similarly, the fact that the number of females per 1,000 males is higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas and that 33 per cent of rural women belong to the working force (against 56.1% of rural men) affects sex mores, social codes, social rituals, and social institutions. The family structure, caste composition, religious variations, economic life, land relations, poverty, and the standard of life in villages also affect villagers' life. We will describe each of these aspects separately.

#### **The Family**

Family and familism play a decisive role in the material and cultural life of villages and in moulding the psychological characteristics of the rural collectivity. While joint family continues to be the predominant form, nuclear family also exists as a result of the growth of market economy in the agrarian areas, migration of youth to cities, and the impact of urban socio-economic forces on the rural society. In spite of this change, in comparison to urban family, rural family is far more homogeneous, integrated, and organically functioning. The ties between parents and children, husband and wife, siblings and siblings and among affinal kin are stronger and last longer than those in an urban family. Another characteristic of the rural family is that it is generally agriculture-oriented, i.e., a very large majority of its members are engaged in the agricultural occupation. Since members of the rural family form a single economic unit, cooperate with one another in agricultural operations, hold property in common usually managed by the oldest member of the family, and since they spend most of their time together, their beliefs, attitudes, aspirations and values are similar. The interdependence of members on each other enables them to develop more collectivist family consciousness and less individualistic emotion. Though the impact of urbanisation, industrialisation, education, etc., has weakened traditional authority structure, created centrifugal tendencies, and reduced economic homogeneity based on a single economic activity, yet the family has not become atomistic, and family as an institution continues to be strong. It will not be illogical to hold that though rural family is undergoing a qualitative change, the dominance of familism is dropping off, family ego is diminishing, and the rule of custom is being replaced by the rule of law, yet family is not disintegrating.

#### **Caste System**

There was a time (say, up to the 1940s) when the caste system in rural areas was rigid, caste councils were very powerful, and caste determined the status and opportunities for mobility of individuals. Even land ownership and power structure existed on caste lines. But after the 1950s, spread of means of communication, education, growth of competitive economy, etc., have transformed self-contained castes into mobile classes. Certain castes have been losing previous status and functions and slowly submerging into the lowest class groups of modern society, while on the other hand, many lower castes are gaining economic and political power and emerging as dominant castes. Scholars like A.R. Desai, Andre Beteille, Yogendra Singh, B.R. Chauhan, etc., have pointed out change in the caste system, its decreasing effect on people, and increasing effect of the class system.

There is also change in the economic life including rural indebtedness based on caste system. R.K. Nehru has vividly pointed out in his exploratory study of a few villages what close relation existed earlier and exists today between caste and indebtedness and credit in the rural areas.

There used to be castes which were predominantly composed of members who were almost hereditary debtors while some others were those who were mainly creditors. Recent studies have shown change in this aspect. There is also change in the habitat pattern based on caste. While earlier, the areas in which houses were located and the type of the houses built, depended on caste membership, today there is no relation between caste and habi-tat. Another factor important in the caste system in rural areas was occupational, economic, and social mobility. Now the members of a caste do not necessarily perform caste-determined occupation. As the result, some castes slide down the economic ladder while some castes go up. Earlier, caste determined the attitude of rural men towards education but now even the most backward castes have started giving their children, including girls, education. Religious life of rural people which was rigorously determined by caste is no longer affected by it. Religious practices are slowly changing in villages. Caste, however, influences today political life of the villagers. The choice or rejection of candidates as well as the nature of propoganda in political elections are not fully determined by caste considerations alone. Extra-caste considerations too, to a large extent, influence political prejudices and predilections. Leadership too is not totally based on caste membership in the rural society. Caste leaders are no longer leaders of the social, economic, political, and ideological life of the villagers. The *jajmani* system and inter-caste economic relations have also undergone significant change. New legislative measures too have affected inter-caste relations among the villagers. In short, caste in rural life has undergone crucial changes in varied fields.

## Religion

Rural religion can be studied in relationship to three aspects: (i) as providing a specific outlook, say belief in possession by spirits, magic, witchcraft, worship of dead ancestors, and so on (ii) as a body of religious practices including prayers, sacrifices and rituals (iii) as an institutional complex, i.e., as a conglomeration of numerous sub-religious and religious cults, say Vaisvanism, Shivaism, etc.

In period before independence, religion played a significant role in determining the life processes of the rural society. This was because rural people had greater predisposition to religion than what the urban people had. Explaining high and low production in agriculture, dependence on the forces of nature like rains, natural calamities, etc., and pleasure and displeasure of gods also pointed out religiosity among the villagers. Belief in spirits, magic, ghosts, witchcraft and other forms of primitive religion was rampant among the rural people. Further, religious outlook of the rural people overwhelmingly dominated their intellectual, emotional and practical life. It was difficult to locate any aspect of their life which was not permeated with and coloured by religion. Religious beliefs also affected their folk songs, paintings, marriage customs, and social festivals, etc. Rituals are religious means by which purity of an individual and his social life becomes guaranteed. There are eating rituals, birth rituals, marriage rituals, death rituals, occupational rituals, sowing and harvesting rituals, and so on. Rituals dominated the life of the rural people. They prescribed a pattern of behaviour for individuals as well as for various social groups in all spheres of life. Particular sets of rituals were dictated to a particular caste. Social condemnation and even a threat of excommunica-tion provided sanction for the strict enforcement of rituals among their members.

Temples too had and continue to have great significance in rural areas. These are used not only for prayers but also for education, organising cultural activities, social functions, social welfare work, holding political and public meetings, propagating ethical values, dispensing justice, and so on. There are temples with idols of gods and goddesses as well as local dei-ties. Some village temples are owned publicly and some privately.

In the new economic and political environment, after independence, new norms, basically non-religious and secular and derived out of a liberal democratic philosophy, have emerged and increasingly began to super-sede the authoritarian religious norms. Villagers started picking up democratic and equalitarian ideas. New secular institutions and associations and new secular leadership and social controls began to emerge within the rural society. This also does not mean that religion does not exercise a powerful hold over the mind of the rural people today. In fact,

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the contemporary rural society has become a battle-ground of struggle between the forces of religious orthodoxy and authoritarian social conceptions on the one hand and those of secular democratic advance on the other.

If we analyse class structure in rural India in post-independence period, we find four classes: the three classes in the agricultural field are of landowners, tenants, and labourers, while the fourth class is of non-agriculturists. According to A.R. Desai (1959), landowners constitute about 22 per cent, tenants about 27 per cent, agricultural labourers about 31 per cent and non-agriculturalists about 20 per cent. A large majority of the cultivators (60%) are marginal cultivators with less than 2 hectares land, followed by small cultivators (16%) with 2 to 5 hectares land, medium cultivators (6%) with 5 to 10 hectares land, and big cultivators (18%) with more than 10 hectares land (*Ibid*: 25). The available land per family in villages is less than one acre (or 0.4 ha). About 75 per cent of the total sown area is under food crops. About 35 per cent of the total produce is sold by cultivators. In about 65 per cent of these sale transactions, commodities are sold to the trader in the village itself. The marketing of agricultural produce in the *mandis* (markets) is largely in the hands of intermediaries who represent private interests and who control both credit as well as disposal of the produce. Thus, a large number of agrarian proletariat, a large number of uneconomic holders of land, and a small number of artisans and self-employed people in villages reveal a miserable economic life lived by these people.

With this background of agrarian structure, let us now analyse agrarian relations. The relations may be classified as (a) those which are defined and enforced by law, (b) which are customary, and (c) which are of fluctuating character. Daniel Thorner (1956 and 1973; also see, Gupta, 1991: 261-270) rejected the often-described classification of cultivators in rural areas in three categories: landlords, tenants, and labourers. This was on the ground that one and the same man can belong simultaneously to all three of these categories. A person can himself cultivate a few acres of land he owns, give some land on rent, and in emergency may work on other's field as labourer. He has analysed agrarian relations by using three specific terms: *Malik* for agricultural landlords, *Kisan* for working peasants (including tenants), and *Mazdoor* for agricultural labourers. The *Malik* derives his agricultural income primarily (although not necessarily solely) from property rights in the soil, i.e., from a share of the produce of lands possessed by him. The share is realised in cash as well as in kind (percentage of produce). He may give his land either to tenant(s) or may cultivate it by hiring labourers. He may manage the hired labourers himself or through a manager. The *Malik* may also have subsidiary income from business, profession, etc. The *Maliks* are of two types: those who are absentee landlords and those who reside in the village in which they own land. *Kisans* are the working peasants, who may be small landowners or tenants.

## 1.4 Socio-cultural Dynamics through the Ages

In loose and broad terms socio-cultural dynamics refer to the changes in the social and cultural attributes of a society. Though social and cultural attributes are seen as an integral whole and hence inseparable, yet, social here refers to the structural aspects such as patterned interactions. We come across through various social institutions. By cultural attributes we refer to the collectively shared, values, ideas and symbols which are associated with human groups. Thus socio-cultural dynamics is a universal and timeless process. Since no society can be static, all societies at all times pass through this process of change.

Socio-cultural dynamics is a highly complex phenomenon. If the forces of change emanate within the social structure, it may be termed as endogenous. The rise of socio-religious ideologies such as Buddhism or Jainism may be examples of endogenous change while the changes occurring through the advent of Islam or Christianity that came from outside may be put under the category of exogenous changes. Changes within Indian society have occurred through both of these processes.

## 1.5 Impact of Modern West on Indian Society

Socio-cultural change in India under the impact of the modern west presents yet another important facet of socio cultural dynamics. India has always been a highly traditional society and it is only

through contact with the modern west that the process of modernization, both technological and cultural, was initiated into Indian society. The sociologists have described these changes as heterogenetic process of change. Moreover, though the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch, too, had contacts with India but it is the British influence which had a profound impact on Indian society.

In order to understand the socio-cultural dynamics with reference to the western impact, we must know the nature of Indian society and the western tradition. Indian culture was highly traditional while the western culture was a modernizing one in terms of Rationalism, Individualism and Utilitarianism. It also contained the elements of Egalitarianism and Universalism unlike the traditional Indian social system based on status and hierarchy with a strong religious orientation. With the advent of British rule, new structures developed in India notable of which are educative, legal and military and these along with other factors of change introduced new criteria for stratification of which the criteria secular in nature played very important role in the coming future. Some of the important criteria and factors of change are described below.

A very important aspect of western impact was the introduction of English language and secular education. Before the advent of British rule, the official and administrative work in India were being carried out through Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu. They introduced English language and it provided a window to the outside world. It also facilitated exposure to a new value system based on egalitarianism, rationalism and secularism. Introduction of new and modern means of transport and communication contributed to increase in spatial and social mobility. The new printing technology, postal services and radio helped in the dissemination of ideas. At the level of ideas, a new awakening began and it became harbinger of radical social change. The introduction of a new penal code not only brought about changes in the legal system and distribution of justice, it directly attacked the traditional discriminatory Hindu law which was highly discriminatory and unjust especially for the *dalit* sections of Indian society. The principle of 'equality before law' was established along with a uniform legal system throughout India. Industrialization and urbanization—important factors of change—registered a sharp rise. The process of industrialization facilitated new determinants of social status and secular indicators of social status such as material indicators were introduced to the Indian society. The concept of 'nationalism' gradually emerged and it played an important unifying role in Indian society.

Here, it is important to note that the impact of westernization, also facilitated the emergence of a new westernized elite that replaced the traditional elite of Indian society. This new elite equipped and inspired by a new ideology and value system looked at its own 'society' in a different way. It re-interpreted Hinduism and caste system in a progressive and more humane way and became a harbinger of a new social order. Thus, the impact of westernization, immensely contributed to the technological and cultural modernization of India. Although 'how modern the contemporary India is' has been a matter of debate and sociologists such as Deepankar Gupta (2001) have expressed scepticism about India's "mistaken modernity", but the fact remains that the Indian society could never be the same again after it came under the influence of the west. But at the same time it is also true that these changes did not take place through the total replacement of traditional structures. The traditional structures in India have also shown an amazing resilience and have retained their basic features adapting to new roles. Caste and religion are two examples of this adaptation. Perhaps, that is why Yogendra Singh chose the title of his very popular book as 'Modernization of Indian Tradition'. This title may sound very unusual or even contradictory to some people but those who understand the socio-cultural dynamics of Indian society shall agree with it.

### Continuity and Change

Any society and every society is a continuation of the past, but a range of continuity is maintained even in the midst of change coming into the same society from time to time. This is how the identity of a society is maintained over a period of time. Even otherwise some continuity is essential because human nature is immutable. As S.C. Dube(1990) rightly suggests the notions of ascribed status, hierarchy, ritual purity and impurity have been the basic ingredients of Hindu



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social structure. These have been attacked from time to time by social and religious reform movements, secularization process and host of others. But the system seems to have a remarkable resilience. It yields some ground but returns again. For instance, when caste is sought to be dislodged from the religious (ritual) domain, it enters into the political process and caste consciousness comes back with a vengeance through urbanization. In the face of scientific temper, religiosity and ritualism also increased and a substantial segment of the modern educated class shows latent and sometime overt acceptance of the religious phenomenon sometimes steeped in irrationality and superstition. Moreover, even the religious ideologies that emerged outside India such as Islam and Christianity too accept some of these attributes and become Indianized'. The joint family norms instead of fading away in the face of urbanization and industrialization may still be retained by adapting to the process of democratization and acceptance of dissent. The joint family today is more democratic and the traditional autocratic authority of the *karta* (head of the joint family) has become a thing of the past. All these examples point to the fact that what is being continued is a transformed version-of the past, When a Clifford Geertz talks about "Old Societies, New states", he has a point.

Another dimension of continuity in Indian society may be explained through the continuity of Little Traditions' with Great Traditions. Even among the modern, educated urban people, during sickness in the family, a modern physician visits the patient in the morning and the same family takes recourse to sorcery *ganda* and *taveez* (amulet) *bhabhut* from the so called godmen, *swamis* and *babas*, *Pirs* and *faqirs*. A common sight in any Indian village is the puja for the tractor bought by a farmer, invoking the blessings of the local deity, performing *aarti* and applying *sindoor* to the tractor, a product of modern technology. Not only the continuity between the Little Traditions and Great Traditions, even two different Great Traditions may go together or get fused into one another. For the vast multitudes of the Hindu masses paying respect to the *mazar* of a Sufi saint alongwith praying in a temple is not unusual or mutually contradictory. It does not dilute their Hindutva. The contribution of a number of Muslims to the *Shastriya Sangeet* is well known and a number of these musicians have been paying their respect to Saraswati before starting their daily *riyaz* (practice) of music both vocal as well as instrumental. Ustad Bismillah Khan playing Shehnai on the threshold of Kashi Vishwanath temple immediately after performing Haj at Mecca is a pleasant sight to many. It tells us that there is something inherent in Indian civilization, which facilitates the cultural continuity.

Among the factors of change in Indian society discussed in this section, independence from British rule, democratization, adult franchise, constitution as a vehicle of change (state sponsored change), industrialization and urbanization, modern education and increase in education, legislative and administrative means may be the most important factors of change. At the grassroots level, industrialization and market economy has led to breakdown of Jajmani system. Urbanization has contributed to the increased occupational mobility and disorganization of joint family at least structurally, new system of stratification based on achievement rather than ascription has emerged. But, as pointed out elsewhere in this section, these changes have not taken place through wholesale replacement of traditional structures. But the craving for retaining and strengthening the traditional social institutions such as caste and religion along with modernization pose a threat of breakdown or 'cultural lag' to the process of modernization. The increasing level of communalism and casteism along with violence, use of modern technology like television to promote religious animosity and growth of separatism may be cited as examples. The active participation of the affluent urban middle class in looting spree and in the communal violence in the Gujarat's recent holocaust speak volumes of communalisation of this modern urban middle class. Increased ritualism, religiosity and religious consciousness and an upbeat economy, democracy and declining levels of tolerance of dissent, an open polity with atrocities on the weaker sections, high spiritualism with increasing vulgarisation of values are alarming to the students of contemporary Indian society. As S.C. Dube (1990) remarks, contemporary Indian society is undergoing a trauma of change and is confronting a series of dilemmas and paradoxes. While some aspects of tradition will survive because of their vitality and usefulness, many of the scaly prejudices of the past will have to be eradicated and structures of exploitation and tyranny demolished. The road ahead is long, the process may be painful, but every citizen of India has a stake in the future.



**Self-Assessment**

Notes

**1. Choose the correct option:**

- (i) India is the seventh largest and the second most populous nation of the world occupying ..... of the total world area.  
 (a) 2.4%                      (b) 3.5%                      (c) 2.8%                      (d) None of these
- (ii) After Hindi the highest spoken language in India .....  
 (a) Bengali                      (b) Telugu                      (c) Urdu                      (d) Marathi
- (iii) Sikkism emerged in the .....  
 (a) 13rd century                      (b) 14th century                      (c) 15th century                      (d) None of these
- (iv) According to B.S. Guha, Indian population is derived from .....  
 (a) two ethnic groups                      (b) six ethnic groups  
 (c) negrites                      (d) None of these
- (v) Nordic Aryans came from central Asia between .....  
 (a) 3000 and 2500 B.C.                      (b) 2000 and 1500 B.C.  
 (c) 1000 and 500 B.C.                      (d) None of these

**1.6 Summary**

- India is the seventh largest and the second most populous nation of the world occupying 2.4 per cent of the total world area. It contains about 15.0 per cent of the world's population living in a variety of social, economic, geographical and ecological conditions.
- The diversity runs through various races, religions, castes, tribes, languages, social customs, cultural and sub-cultural beliefs, political philosophies, and ideologies.
- The Indo-Aryan languages include Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi, Bihari, Rajasthani, Assamese, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Kashmiri languages covering about three-fourths of India's population. The Dravidian languages include Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. The European languages include English, Portuguese, and French. The last two languages are mostly spoken by people in Goa and Pondicherry.
- Some states were even created after independence on the language basis, e.g., Punjab was divided in Punjab and Haryana, and Maharashtra was divided in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Some states like Mizoram and Nagaland were created on cultural basis.
- Hinduism advocates the doctrines of *karma* (doing one's duties), *dharma*, rebirth (man takes 84,000 births, depending upon good and bad deeds of his life), immortality of soul (soul never dies), renunciation, and *moksha* (freedom from the cycle of births and deaths).
- Islam came to India along with the Muslim invasions. It is strictly a monotheistic religion which professes the fatalistic acceptance of *Allah's* (God's) will. It does not believe in idol worship. It considers Prophet Mohammed as the greatest prophet and the Quran as the most sacred book. It prescribes five duties as the primary duties of a devout Muslim: belief in *Allah*, prayers five times a day, the giving of alms, a month's fast every year, and a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime.
- The castes are hereditary endogamous groups with fixed traditional occupations, observing commensal prohibitions and social restrictions on interaction. It is believed that there are about 3,000 castes in the country. These castes are grouped as upper castes (like Brahmins, Rajputs, Baniyas, Kayasthas, etc.), intermediate castes (like Ahir, Sunar, Kurmi, etc.), and lower castes (like Dhobi, Nai, etc.).
- The total tribal population in India is 52.03 million (1991 census), which comes to 7.8 per cent of the country's total population. The important tribes are: Santhals, Bhils, Meenas, Gonds, Mundas, Nagas, Khasis, Oraons, Garos, and Hos.

Notes

- Mongoloids are people with medium height, high cheekbones, sparse hair, oblique height and yellow complexion and are confined to the north-eastern fringes of India in Assam, Nagaland and Mizo hills. Nordic Aryans came from Central Asia between 2,000 and 1,500 B.C. and settled in northern and western Punjab from where they spread to the valley of Ganga and beyond.
- People may worship different deities but the religious scriptures—Puranas, Brahmanas, Epics and the Vedas—knit the numerous heterogeneous groups together into one religious society and give them the sense that their country is sacred. The worshippers may visit different centres of pilgrimage but all have a common goal of “earning religious merit by visiting a sacred place”.
- India fought for political freedom as one unified entity. After independence, it faced an attack of China and three attacks of Pakistan as one nation.
- The caste system also has provided a common cultural ideology to Indians. Though it is true that caste has created inter-caste conflicts and has also created a major social problem of untouchability and has brought a rift between the higher and the untouchable castes, but it is also true that the *jajmani* system till recently had succeeded in maintaining harmony and co-operation among various castes in the rural areas. A significant change has taken place in the power relations of different castes in the last few decades.
- The ‘divisions’ in the country may be dysfunctional but their values may not necessarily be inconsistent with being a citizen of India. The disappearance of loyalties to these divisions may not be feasible but they need not be perceived and denounced as anti-national.
- The most important aspect of culture in India has been religious diversity. For long India has been the home of followers of all major religions of the world - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Bahaism.
- The Hindu proportion is higher in the rural segment of the population - the national average being 84 per cent - thus revealing the predominantly rural character of Hindu population.
- The Buddhists constitute 0.76 per cent of the country’s population. Traditionally, the Buddhists are mainly located in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura.
- “The Jains have favoured their concentration in the dry regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The two districts in which their share is the highest in urban population are Barmer (13.4 per cent) and Jalor (10.5 per cent)” (Aijazuddin Ahmed, 1999).
- In the twentieth century Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) put forward the most explicit formulation of religious pluralism and announced that ‘the world as a whole will never have and need not have a single religion’.
- The issue of religious conversion in India has always been a highly emotive issue.
- The Christian missions have been the main agency of religious conversions but their appeal was addressed more directly to untouchables.
- Groups that converted in the mass movements may have hoped to gain a measure of freedom from the oppressive structures of caste.
- Close socio-cultural interaction between different religious communities would never have been possible without the spirit of religious accommodation between such communities.
- Anthropology shares the concept of syncretism with scholars of comparative religion who have used the term at least since the early 1600s (often disparagingly to condemn the adulteration of true Christian belief). Theologians continue to apply the term to religious systems” (Lamout Lindstorm, 1996).
- Inter-religious interaction and its manifestation may also be seen in terms of Little and Great Traditions. The Great Traditions of a religion, largely textual, contained in sacred scriptures and epics may not be showing much sharing to the common masses but the sharing of Little

Traditions which are local in nature are more important for the students of sociology and anthropology. The vast multitude of masses, especially rural masses, largely live by their Little Traditions.

- The density of population in villages is so low that it not only affects production and distribution but also the total life of the community and peoples' living standard. Both birth rate and death rate are high in villages in comparison to cities which adversely affects the quantitative and the qualitative growth of the rural people.
- Family and familism play a decisive role in the material and cultural life of villages and in moulding the psychological characteristics of the rural collectivity. While joint family continues to be the predominant form, nuclear family also exists as a result of the growth of market economy in the agrarian areas, migration of youth to cities, and the impact of urban socio-economic forces on the rural society.
- The interdependence of members on each other enables them to develop more collectivist family consciousness and less individualistic emotion. Though the impact of urbanisation, industrialisation, education, etc., has weakened traditional authority structure, created centrifugal tendencies, and reduced economic homogeneity based on a single economic activity, yet the family has not become atomistic, and family as an institution continues to be strong.
- Religious life of rural people which was rigorously determined by caste is no longer affected by it. Religious practices are slowly changing in villages.
- Leadership too is not totally based on caste membership in the rural society. Caste leaders are no longer leaders of the social, economic, political, and ideological life of the villagers. The *jajmani* system and inter-caste economic relations have also undergone significant change.

### 1.7 Key-Words

1. Unity in diversity : It is a concept of unity without uniformity and diversity without fragmentation that shifts focus from unity based on a mere tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological differences towards a more complex unity based on an understanding that difference enriches human interactions.

### 1.8 Review Questions

1. Discuss unity in diversity in India.
2. What are the cultural and Regional diversities of Indian society? Discuss.
3. Write a short note on the evolution of Indian society along with socio-cultural dimensions.
4. Explain the impact of Modern West on Indian society.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) (a)                      (ii) (b)                      (iii) (c)                      (iv) (b)                      (v) (a)

### 1.9 Further Readings



Books

1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 2: Major Segments of Indian Society

### CONTENTS

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss Tribal Life in India.
- Explain Village Communities in India.
- Examine Urban Communities in India.

### Introduction

The tribal population in India, according to the 1991 census, was 67.76 million. This was almost equal to the population of the United Kingdom. The tribals formed 8.08 per cent of the country's total population (*The Hindustan Times*, July 11, 1995). At present, India has the second largest tribal population in the world, next only to Africa. The tribes in India are spread over the length and breadth of the country. They vary in strength in different states from a few hundreds to several lakhs. The highest number of tribals according to the 1991 census are found in Madhya Pradesh (15.4 million), followed by Maharashtra (7.3 million), Orissa (7 million), Bihar (6.6 million) and Gujarat (6.1 million) (*The Hindustan Times*, July 11, 1995; also see, *Crime in India*, 1994:246). Of the total tribal population of the country, a little more than three-fifths (62.75%) of tribals are found in above-mentioned five states. In Mizoram, the tribal population constitutes 95 per cent of the total population of the state, in Nagaland 89 per cent, in Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh 80 per cent each, in Tripura 70 per cent, in Madhya Pradesh and Orissa 23 per cent each, in Gujarat 14 per cent, in Rajasthan 12 per cent, and in Assam and Bihar 10 per cent each. Thus, in four states (Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh) tribal population is more than 80 per cent of the total population of the state.

The most numerically high are the *Gonds* (Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh) – about 4 million, the *Bhils* (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh) – about 4 million, and *Santbals* (Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal) – more than 3 million. The smallest tribal community is the Andamanese with the strength of only 19. The bulk of the tribal population regard themselves as Hindus. Religion-wise, 89 per cent tribals are Hindus, 5.5 per cent Christians, 0.3 per cent Buddhists, 0.2 per cent Muslims, and 5 per cent others. All those who regard themselves as Hindus do not stand fully incorporated in the Hindu social order. In this context, the tribals can be classified as: (i) those incorporated in the Hindu social order, i.e., who have accepted the caste structure, e.g., Bhils, Bhumij; (ii) positively oriented towards the Hindu social order, i.e., though they have adopted the ethos and symbols and the world-view of Hindus yet they have not included

themselves in the caste frame, e.g., Santhals, Oraon, Munda, Gonds; (iii) negatively oriented towards the Hindu social order, e.g., Mizos, Nagas; and (iv) indifferent towards the Hindu social order, e.g., some tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

## 2.1 Tribal Life in India

The tribals living in different states belong to various *racial* groups (e.g., proto-australoid, which include Santhals, Munda, Oraon and Bhumij, and Mangoloid which include Garo, etc.), *linguistic* groups (austric like Santhals, Munda, Bhumij, Dravidian like Oraon, and Tibeto-Chinese like Garo, Bhutia, etc.), *economic* (food-gatherers, cultivators, labourers), *social* and *religious* categories. There is also a wide range of variation in their level of development and their level of socio-cultural integration. But there are also certain similarities. The tribals as a whole are technologically and educationally backward. Though the majority of the tribals follow patrilineal system of social organisation, yet there are quite a few who have matrilineal systems (like Garo, etc.). A sizeable proportion of Nagas, Mizos, Santhals, Oraon, and Munda, etc., have embraced Christianity. Some (like Bhutia, Lepcha) are largely identified with Buddhism.

### Distinctive Features of Tribal Communities

Tribes are relatively isolated from larger cultural influences, have a relative cultural homogeneity and a simple technology. They believe in spirits, magic and witchcraft. They have their own taboos which prohibit 'certain' actions that are punishable by the community, by the supernatural, or by magical consequences. Large number of the tribes believe in animism, according to which all objects—both animate and inanimate— are permanently or temporarily inhabited by spirits or souls. Often, an activity is believed to be caused by these spirits. Some spirits are worshipped and treated with fear and respect. Some scholars have maintained that animism was the earliest form of religion of the tribes. Many tribes believe in ancestor worship too.

Some important features of tribes in India are:

1. *Common name*: Each caste has a distinct name of its own through which it is distinguished from others.
2. *Common territory*: Tribes generally occupy common geographical areas.
3. *Common language*: Members of one tribe speak the same language. Each tribe has its own dialect, if not the script.
4. *Common culture*: Each tribe has prescribed patterns of behaviour and festivals and deities to worship.
5. *Endogamy*: Each tribe has the practice of marrying members within their own tribe.
6. *Political organisation*: All tribes have their own political organisation. They have councils of elders which control members.
7. As against the national average of 43 per cent, 57 per cent of the tribals are economically active.
8. As regards the nature of work, against 73 per cent national average, 91 per cent tribal workers are engaged in agriculture. About 3 per cent tribals are engaged in manufacturing (against 11% of general population) and 5 per cent in servicing (tertiary) sector (against 16% average of general population). About 1 per cent tribals are engaged in forestry and food-gathering.

Some other features of the tribals are: most of them live in isolated terrains; the main sources of their livelihood are agriculture and gathering of forest produce; they do not cultivate for profit; they still largely rely on barter system; they spend a greater part of their earnings on social and religious ceremonies; and a large number of them are illiterate and are victimised by unscrupulous forest contractors and moneylenders.

### Definition of Tribe

There are no specific criteria by which we may distinguish a tribe from a caste. In broad terms, a tribe is defined as "a community occupying a common geographic area and having a similar language and culture or beliefs and practices". Nadel has described tribe as "a society with a


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linguistic, cultural and political boundry". But there are many tribal societies which lack government and the centralised author-ity in the ordinary sense of the term. Likewise, cultural homogeneity in a tribe is also elusive in this age.

Scholars like G.S. Ghurye, T.B. Naik, F.G. Bailey and Verrier Elwin have used different criteria like religion, geographical isolation, language, economic backwardness, and political organisation for distinguishing caste from tribe.

On the basis of *religion*, it is said that the religion of tribals is Animism and that of the people with caste system is Hinduism. Hutton (1963) and Bailey (1960:263) believe that tribals are not Hindus but are animists. The basic characteristics of animism are: the beliefs that all animate and inanimate objects are permanently or temporarily inhabited by spirits; all activities are caused by these spirits; spirits have power over the lives of men; men can be possessed by spirits; and they can be influenced by magic. On the other hand, the chief characteristics of Hinduism are: *dharma*, *bhakti*, *karma* and rebirth. It will be wrong to say that the Hindus, particularly the lower caste Hindus, do not believe in spirits and ghosts or in magic and possession. Similarly, there are many tribals who worship Hindu gods and goddesses, celebrate Hindu festivals and fairs and observe Hindu customs, traditions and rituals. It is, therefore, not easy to distinguish between Animism and Hinduism. Elwin (1943), Risley (1908) and Ahuja (1965) have also maintained that the distinction between Hinduism and Animism is artificial and meaningless. Religion as a single criterion, thus, cannot be used to distinguish between a tribe and a caste. Ghurye, Naik and Bailey have also rejected this criterion.

Due to isolation and negligible contacts with their (civilised) neighbours, tribals are comparatively less civilised than the Hindus. Though it is true that at one time some tribals lived away from means of communication yet many caste Hindus also lived in isolated regions, while many tribals lived in plains. In this age, no groups live in isolation. Geographical isolation too, thus, cannot be accepted as a criterion for differentiating tribe from caste.



*Did u know?* On *geographical isolation* basis, it is said that tribals live in geographically isolated regions like hills, mountains and jungles but caste Hindus live in the plains.

Using *language* as a criterion for difference between a tribe and a caste, it is said that each tribe has its own language but not a caste. But then there are tribes which do not have their own languages but speak the dialect of one of the main Indian languages, as in South India. Therefore, language also cannot be accepted as a criterion for distinction.

*Economic backwardness* too is not a correct criterion for distinction. If tribals are backward and primitive, caste Hindus are also almost equally poor. On the other hand, we have economically advanced tribes too. Bailey (1960:9) also rejects this criterion by holding that it is wrong to hold sociologically that 'economic backwardness' refers to a 'standard of living' rather than to 'a type of economic relationship'. He himself used 'economic structure' and 'politico-economic organisation' for differentiating the Konds (tribe) from Oriyas (caste) in Orissa. Bailey (1960) presented a systematic interactional model for considering the position of the tribe vis-a-vis caste as two ideal poles in a linear continuum. He concentrated on two factors: control over land and right to resources of land. He maintained that in both the tribal and caste societies, we find land-owners and landless people who are dependants on landowners for their share of land resources. But analysing the economic organisation of a 'village territory' (inhabited by castes) and a 'clan territory' (inhabited by tribes), he found that a village is divided into economically specialised interdependent castes arranged hierarchically whereas though a clan territory is also composed of economically specialised groups, yet these are not hierarchically arranged; nor are they economically interdependent on each other. In other words, in a tribal society, a larger proportion of people has a direct access to land while in the case of caste-based society, a very few people are land-owners and a large number achieve the right to land through a dependent relationship. Thus, according



to Bailey, a tribe is organised on a 'segmentary solidarity' while a caste is organised on an 'organic solidarity'. But Bailey avers that at what point of continuum a tribe ceases and a caste begins is difficult to say. In India, the situation is such that there is hardly any tribe which exists as a separate society, having a completely separate political boundary. Economically too, the tribal economy is not different from the regional or national economy. But we do regard some communities as tribal and include them in the recognised list of scheduled tribes.

### Tribal exploitation and unrest

For ages, tribals were considered a primitive segment of Indian society. They lived in forests and hills without having more than a casual contact with the so-called civilised and advanced neighbours. There being no population pressures, there was no attempt to penetrate their areas and impose alien values and beliefs on the tribals. But when the British consolidated their position in the country, their colonial aspirations and administrative needs necessitated 'opening up' the entire country through an effective communication system. The British introduced the system of landownership and revenue. Annual tax was trebled which was beyond the paying capacity of tribal cultivators. Under the increasing pressure of population, many outsiders also started settling in tribal regions. With their money power, they offered credit facilities at the doorstep. Initially, it provided relief to tribals but gradually the system became exploitative. Newly established courts of law helped the exploiters. This economic, and later social and cultural exploitation, aroused the tribal leaders to mobilise fellow tribals and start agitations. With the increasing feelings of deprivation, mass agitations, struggles and movements also increased. Initially, they were against blood suckers and usurpers of their rights but ultimately they turned against the government or the rulers.

Tribal unrest and discontent, thus, may be described as the cumulative of a number of contributory factors. The main factors were:

- Lethargy, indifference, and lack of sympathy from administrators and bureaucrats in dealing with tribal grievances.
- Harshness of forest laws and regulations.
- Lack of legislation to prevent the passing of tribal land into the hands of non-tribals.
- Ineffective government measures to rehabilitate tribal population.
- Lack of interest and dynamism among the political elite to solve tribal problems.
- Delay in implementation of recommendations made by high level bodies.
- Discrimination in implementation of reformatory measures.

In short, the causes of tribal unrest may be described as economic, social and political.

### Tribal Problems

The main problems the tribals face are:

- They possess small and uneconomical landholdings because of which their crop yield is less and hence they remain chronically indebted.
- Only a small percentage of the population participates in occupational activities in the secondary and tertiary sectors.
- Literacy rate among tribals is very low. While in 1961, it was 18.53 per cent, in 1991 it increased to 29.60 per cent which compared to general literacy rate of 52.21 per cent in the country is very low, because while the growth of literacy rate in the past three decades in the country was 28.21 per cent, among the STs it was only 11.7 per cent (*The Hindustan Times*, July 11, 1995). Though tribal literacy rate in Mizoram is 82.71 per cent and in Nagaland, Sikkim and Kerala it is between 57 per cent and 61 per cent, lack of literacy among tribal people has been identified as a major development problem.
- A good portion of the land in tribal areas has been legally transferred to non-tribals. Tribals demand that this land should be returned to them. In fact, tribals had earlier enjoyed considerable freedom to use forests and hunt animals. Forests not only provide them materials

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to build their homes but also give them fuel, herbal medicines for curing diseases, fruits, wild game, etc. Their religion makes them believe that many of their spirits live in trees and forests. Their folk-tales often speak of the relations of human beings and the spirits. Because of such physical and emotional attachment to forests, tribals have reacted sharply to restrictions imposed by the government on their traditional rights.

- Tribal government programmes have not significantly helped the tribals in raising their economic status. The British policy had led to ruthless exploitation of the tribals in various ways as it favoured the *zamindars*, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors, and excise, revenue and police officials.
- Banking facilities in the tribal areas are so inadequate that the tribals have to depend mainly on moneylenders. Being miserably bogged down in indebtedness, tribals demand that Agricultural Indebtedness Relief Acts should be enacted so that they may get back their mortgaged land.
- About 90 per cent of the tribals are engaged in cultivation and most of them are landless and practise shifting cultivation. They need to be helped in adopting new methods of cultivation.
- The unemployed and the underemployed want help in finding secondary sources of earning by developing animal husbandry, poultry farming, handloom weaving, and the handicrafts sector. Most of the tribals live in sparsely populated hills and communications in the tribal areas remain tough. The tribals, therefore, need to be protected against leading isolated life, away from towns and cities, through a network of new roads.
- The tribals are exploited by Christian missionaries. In several tribal areas, mass conversion to Christianity had taken place during the British period. While the missionaries have been pioneers in education and opened hospitals in tribal areas, they have also been responsible for alienating the tribals from their culture. Christian missionaries are said to have many a time instigated the tribals to revolt against the Indian government.

Relations between the tribals and non-tribals thus started worsening and non-tribal residents were increasingly depending for protection on the para-military forces. The demand for separate states for tribals took the shape of insurgency in Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Bihar, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tripura. Neighbouring countries, unfriendly to India, were active in exploiting these anti-Indian sentiments. Infiltration of foreign nationals, gun-running, trafficking in narcotics and smuggling even today are very serious problems in these states surrounded by tribal belts.

In short, the main problems of the tribals are poverty, indebtedness, illiteracy, bondage, exploitation, disease and unemployment.

After independence, tribal problems and tribal unrest have become politicised. An articulate and effective political elite have emerged in several tribal areas. These elite are conscious of tribal rights and are capable of making calculated moves to gain their acceptance. The tribals of Jharkhand region in Bihar and of Bastar region in Madhya Pradesh are recent examples where tribal political leaders have succeeded in compelling the central government to agree to form separate states. A separate tribal state in Bihar (Vananchal) would comprise 18 districts of South Bihar, with tribal population of 26 per cent. The demand for greater Jharkhand state consists of 26 predominantly tribal districts of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. In areas where tribal leadership does not exist, political parties – national, regional or local – are moving in to fill the vacuum. S.C. Dube (1972:30) has also said that today we find a shift in the political attitudes and strategies of the tribals – from politics of compliance and affirmation to politics of pressure and protest. It may be said that the political culture of the tribes is undergoing a radical transformation. This parochial political culture and ‘participant’ political culture is oriented more to sub-national tribal identities than to a broader national identity. When interests of the smaller unit (tribe) and the larger unit (nation) clash, the tendency is to ignore or sacrifice the latter. This perspective resulting in exclusive focus on purely tribal interests and on their solution unlinked with broader national interests imparts parochial overtones to the emerging political culture. On the other hand, in participative political culture, the tribals take an active interest in formulating policies, questioning the usefulness

of political decisions of the government and suggesting correctives (*ibid*:31). The key issue, thus, is of harmonising the national and tribal interests. In other words, the tribal problems have to be viewed not in isolation but in the context of strategies operating in national life.

### Tribal Movements

Numerous uprisings of the tribals have taken place beginning with the one in Bihar in 1772, followed by many revolts in Andhra Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland. The important tribes involved in revolt in the nineteenth century were Mizos (1810), Kols (1795 and 1831), Mundas (1889), Daflas (1875), Khasi and Garo (1829), Kacharis (1839), Santhals (1853), Muria Gonds (1886), Nagas (1844 and 1879), Bhuiyas (1868) and Kondhs (1817).

Before describing tribal movements, the typology of movements needs to be specified. Cameron has classified them in four groups: (1) *Reactionary*, which seek to bring back the good old days. Linton calls them 'revivalistic' movements. (2) *Conservative*, which are organised to obstruct the current changes and seek to maintain status quo. Linton calls them 'perpetuative' movements. (3) *Revisionary*, which desire specific changes by modifying the existing customs, improving or purifying the culture or social order and eliminating some institutions. However, these movements do not attempt to replace the existing structure as a whole. These movements have also been termed as 'social mobility' movements. These movements are found mostly among low castes but not amongst the tribals. (4) *Revolutionary*, which aim at replacing the whole of the culture or social order with another more progressive. This does not mean that everything is to be replaced. This movement is also termed as 'revivalistic' movement.

Most of the social movements among tribals in early India had their origins in religious upheavals like Buddhism and Vaishnavism. Some Vaishnavist movements were found among Meithei tribe in Manipur, Bhumij in West Bengal, Nokte Naga in Assam, Bathudi in Orissa, and tribals in Jharkhand (Bihar), Orissa and south India (Mahapatra 1972: 402). These movements have also been called religious movements. These were also found among Gonds in central India, Kond in Orissa and Bhils in Rajasthan. The Britishers had to face some tribal movements in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries when they sought to stop head-hunting, human sacrifice, or slavery in north-eastern India. There were also movements against oppressing landlords, moneylenders and harassment by police and forest officials in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa and central Indian states. Bhagat movements were found among Oraon of Chotanagpur, Bhils of Rajasthan, etc. These were revivalist movements for avoiding animal food, liquor and blood sacrifices.

After independence, tribal movements may be classified into three groups: (1) movements due to exploitation of outsiders (like those of the Santhals and the Mundas), (2) movements due to economic deprivation (like those of the Gonds in Madhya Pradesh and the Mahars in Andhra Pradesh), and (3) movements due to separatist tendencies (like those of the Nagas and Mizos).

The tribal movements may also be classified on the basis of their orientation into four types: (1) movements seeking political autonomy and formation of a state (Nagas, Mizos, Jharkhand), (2) agrarian movements, (3) forest-based movements, and (4) socio-religious or socio-cultural movements (the Bhagat movement among Bhils of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, movement among tribals of south Gujarat or Raghunath Murmu's movement among the Santhals).

Such reformative movement was reported among the Mundas too under a powerful charismatic leader Dharti Aba who preached Hindu ideals of ritual purity, morality, and asceticism, and criticised the worship of priests. Among the Gonds in Madhya Pradesh, there were religious and social mobility movements in the 1930s by charismatic leaders, claiming Kshatriya status and seeking to purify religion and social institutions.

Surajit Sinha (1972:410) has referred to five types of tribal movements:

1. Ethnic rebellious movements during the British rule in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, like Birsa movement among the Mundas, Kol rebellion in 1832, Santhal rebellion in 1857-58 and Naga rebellion in the 1880s.

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2. Reform movements, emulating the pattern of the higher Hindu castes like the Bhagat movement among the Oraon, Vaishnavite movement among the Bhumi and Kehr movement among the Santhals.
3. Political movements for tribal states within the Indian Union in the post-Independence period like Jharkhand movement in Chotanagpur and Orissa, Hill states movement in Assam and Madhya Pradesh, etc.
4. Secessionist movements like the Naga and Mizo movements.
5. Movement relating to agrarian unrest like Naxalbari movement (1967) and Birsadal movement (1968-69).

If we take into consideration all the tribal movements, including the Naga revolution (which began in 1948 and continued up to 1972 when the new elected government came to power and the Naga insurgency was controlled), the Mizo movement (guerrilla warfare which ended with the formation of Meghalaya state in April 1970, created out of Assam and Mizoram in 1972), the Gond Raj movement (of Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, started in 1941 for a separate state, reaching its peak in 1962-63), the Naxalite movements (of the tribals in Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Assam), the Agrarian movements (of the Gonds and the Bhils in Madhya Pradesh), and the forest-based movements (of the Gonds for getting customary rights in the forests), it could be said that the tribal unrest and the resultant movements were mainly movements launched for liberation from (i) oppression and discrimination, (ii) neglect and backwardness, and (iii) a government which was callous to the tribals' plight marked by poverty, hunger, unemployment and exploitation. Recently, a growing interest has been shown by scholars and politicians in the tribal movement in Chotanagpur in Bihar. This movement is popularly called the Jharkhand movement. The Oraon, the Munda and the Hos are the major tribal communities in Chotanagpur. Their total population is about 50 lakhs comprising 10 per cent of the total population of the state. This movement was started in 1928 by Chotanagar Unnati Samaj under the leadership of a few educated tribal Christians. Later on, the Samaj was renamed Adibasi Sabha. In 1938, it declared itself a political party fighting for tribal interests, when it took the name of Jharkhand Party. The BJP-led government proposed in late 1998 and early 1999 to create a separate Jharkhand state (called Vananchal state comprising six districts and two divisions, Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas of Bihar).

Two instances of tribal exploitation are highlighted here to explain the cause of their movements. At the time of independence, there existed a government order in Andhra Pradesh according to which all land transactions had to be in favour of the tribals. In 1974, the then Congress government passed an order which permitted non-tribals to own 15 acres (5 wet and 10 dry) of land in the area. After this order, non-tribals took away a sizeable part of tribal land. Tribals claimed that about 30,000 acres of land had passed into the hands of non-tribals between 1974 and 1984. During this period, about 2,000 cases of land disputes were lodged in courts and about 400 tribals convicted. The Telugu Desam government quashed the Congress government order in 1984 because of which non-tribals took a defensive position. Tribals were organised by extremists against the non-tribal feudal classes. There were series of incidents of violence between Gonds (tribals) and non-tribals. The non-tribals put up a fight. They burned tribal huntments, criminally assaulted women, wounded and killed the tribals and forced them to do bonded labour for them. In another incident, 21 non-tribals who were allegedly stealing firewood from a forest were caught by the tribals and taken to their village and kept imprisoned till the police rescued them.

The second case refers to a tribal convention organised in February, 1984 in Vidarbha region near Nagpur in Maharashtra. The venue was a small village called Kamalpur, with a population of 1,000 persons. The convention was expected to be attended by 20,000 persons. It was to be inaugurated by the President of Nagpur High Court Bar Association and presided over by eminent persons like a playwright, a film director and a cine artist. Two days before the conference, all routes leading to the venue were sealed, about 1,000 persons were arrested, and prohibitory orders banning the assembly of five or more persons were issued. Interestingly, the persons arrested were charged for carrying objectionable literature, felling trees in forests, and theft of

forest wealth (*Onlooker*, 7 April, 1984:29). The chairman of the Reception Committee was arrested on the charge of theft of forest wealth. He was released by a magistrate but promptly rearrested on a different charge. Among others arrested included musicians who were to perform at the convention, and representatives of student organisations from Bombay, Hyderabad, and Madras. Thus, what could have passed off as innocuous conference with a few fiery speeches was transformed into a major episode giving the venue a battlefield look.

All this shows that when the law does not help tribals, and the government remains callous, and the police fail to protect them, even harasses them, they take up arms against their exploiters. The above-mentioned movements indicate that the tribals adopted two paths of achieving goals: (a) non-violent path of bargaining and negotiating with the government and using a variety of pressure tactics without resorting to violence/revolts, and (b) militant path of revolts or mass struggles based on developing the fighting power of the exploited/oppressed tribal strata. The consequences of both these paths are different. One indicates struggle oriented to reforms, while the other indicates structural transformation of the community. To conclude, since tribals continue to face problems and also continue to feel discontented and deprived, this fact shows that both the above paths have not helped them to achieve their goals.

#### Tribal Leadership

Following L.P. Vidyarthi's appraisal of tribal leadership in initiating and promoting movements, we may point out several characteristics of tribal leadership:

1. The tribal leaders are characterised with the concept of sub-nationalism.
2. The leaders are generally those who are exposed to modern forces.
3. The Christian-oriented and western-educated model which was the exclusive model of leadership for several decades in several tribal areas is now breaking its exclusiveness. For example, the Jharkhand party which had the dominance of Christian adivasis and which was essentially started for the consolidation of Christian converts fast expanded its scope, and the Hindu tribals as well as non-tribal elements got associated with it and it started emphasising the needs and problems of the region. With secularised objectives, political pressures and persuasion, and political convenience, there is a marked turning point in the functioning of the leaders.
5. While the tribal leadership at the regional and state-level seems to be keeping pace with the modern democratic interests, the village leadership in the interior tribal areas continues to be mostly institutional (*say Mukhiya*), formal (*say Sarpanch*), and hereditary.
6. Tribal leaders sometimes join hands with political leaders of other political parties in achieving their political goals.
7. The issues taken up by the leaders are generally those which find expression in tribalism, regionalism, localism and sometimes in religious extremism.
8. The leaders are rural-based as well as urbanised, tradition-oriented as well as modern in outlook, and are Hindus as well as Christians.
9. The leaders are not much educated but are those who believe in certain broad ideologies-religious, political, economic and social.

#### Tribal Women

The term 'status' of women refers to (i) the position women occupy as householders, workers, and citizens; (ii) power and prestige attached to these positions; and (iii) rights and duties they are expected to exercise. Mason (1984) points out that the status of women has three dimensions: prestige, power and autonomy (freedom to take decision about education, marriage, employment, health care, etc.).

The status of women is not the same in all tribes; it differs from tribe to tribe. However, by and large, the status of tribal women is very low in the sense that they have no access to knowledge, to economic resources, and to power, and they have the lowest degree of personal autonomy. Though the extent of tribal female labour-force participation is very low, yet most of the tribal women work irrespective of their economic position. They share more or less equal responsibility



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with men in the economic activities. When men work in other towns and cities, women carry out agricultural work. If we take education as a socio-economic indicator of status, the literacy rate of ST women is low. While the literacy rate among women in general in our country in 1991 was 39.3 per cent among tribal women it was only 18.19 per cent. The highest percentage of ST women are educated up to primary school. The large gender gap may be attributed to non-availability of schools in villages, non-availability of female teachers, feeling shy of sending girls to schools due to prevalent traditional values, using grown-up girls for looking after infants when their mothers go to work, and requiring girls' help in household chores. Tribal women are not allowed to own land. Women are totally unaware of their rights regarding property. Their political awareness is also very low, as they neither read newspapers nor do they listen to the news on the radio and TV. They have also no place in the micro-level village power structure. They are woefully unrepresented in the political structures like tribal councils and village panchayats. However, there are some tribal communities (like Meena, Sema Naga, and Tharus, etc.) in which the status of women cannot be said to be low on every count.

There is no serious widow problem in tribal societies. A widow is free to remarry. There are some tribes where a widow marries her deceased husband's younger brother (levirate marriage). The bride-price custom has not elevated the status of women. It rather degrades them to be treated in the manner of articles of property and a commodity to be bought and sold. Divorce is permitted in many tribal societies. The procedure of divorce is also simple as it consists of mutual consent, a formal ceremony, and paying back of the bride-price.

### **Protective Discrimination and Tribal Welfare and Development (or Tribal Transition)**

Tribal transition' is tribal welfare and tribal development. The governmental programmes implemented in India for the uplift and rehabilitation of tribals have not been able to achieve their goals and tribal proletarianisation has persisted since independence. No wonder, the problem of tribal welfare engaged the attention of a number of scholars in different parts of the country not only in the 1970s and the 1980s (like L.P. Vidyarthi in Bihar in 1971, A.K. Danda and M.G. Kulkarni in Maharashtra in 1974, and Ranjit Gupta, and M.V.T. Raju in Andhra Pradesh in 1971) but also in the 1990s.

#### ***Tribal Welfare***

The strategies adopted by the British administrators for solving the problems of the tribals included acquiring tribal land and forests and declaring certain tribal areas as excluded or partially excluded. But, the British government had also established a number of schools and hospitals in the tribal areas with the help of Christian missionaries who converted many tribals to Christianity. Thus, by and large, during the British period, the tribals remained victims of colonial-feudal domination, ethnic prejudices, illiteracy, poverty, and isolation.

After Independence, provisions were made in the Constitution to safeguard tribal interests and promote their developmental and welfare activities. Gandhiji and Thakkar Bapa also did some pioneering work among the tribals. Nehru enunciated the policy of *Panchseel* for tribal transformation, which rested on following five principles:

1. Avoiding imposing the culture of the majority people on them and encouraging in every way their (tribal) own traditional arts and culture.
2. Respecting tribal rights on land and forest.
3. Training tribal leaders for administrative and developmental activities with the help of some technical personnel from outside.
4. Avoiding over-administering of the tribal areas.
5. Judging results not on the basis of money spent but the quality of human character evolved.

In 1960, the Scheduled Tribe Commission was set up under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar to work for the advancement of the tribals. After the Fifth Five Year Plan, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was designed in 1980 which consisted of two things: (i) socio-economic development of



the STs, and (ii) protection of tribals against exploitation. The funds for TSPs are provided by state governments and the central ministries.

However, TSP results have not been commensurate with the expectations and the investments made so far as heavy emphasis is laid in several states on infrastructural development without corresponding emphasis on the development of the STs. The TSP schemes are supposed to lay emphasis on family-oriented income-generating schemes in sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperatives, tribal crafts and skills, etc., besides laying emphasis on education, health, and housing.

In the Five Year Plans, the programmes for the welfare of the STs aim at: (1) Raising the productivity levels in agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, cottage and small-scale industries, etc., to improve the economic conditions, (2) rehabilitation of the bonded labour (3) education and training programmes, and (4) special development programmes for women and children. But various evaluation studies on all these programmes for the integrated development of the tribals have brought out the inadequacies of these programmes.

### Acculturation and Changes in Tribal Culture

Cultural change is 'change in knowledge, attitudes, ideas, behaviour, religious beliefs, and moral doctrines of individuals who compose the community or the society'. Thus, cultural change is a multifactorial process. Several factors as identified by Raha and Dubash Roy (1997: 149-159) which have brought about changes in the tribal culture are: measures undertaken by the government, communication facilities, spread of education, process of urbanisation, occupational mobility, community development projects, frequent contacts with the neighbouring Hindus in the urban areas, construction of dams in the tribal areas, impact of Christianity, facilities of bank credit, modern medicare, cooperative societies, modern legislation, cash and market economy, and reformist movements.

The tribe-caste interaction and the process of acculturation is found among many tribes in different states. Its best example has been pointed out by Binay Kumar Patnaik's study of Sabaras (tribe) in Ghorabar village in Orissa, who comprise 5 per cent of the total 235 households with 280 people (see Pfeffer, 1997:317-329). The process of undergoing acculturation by this tribe is found in the following changes:

1. The structural change in the tribe is found in discarding egalitarianism (with least of functional dependency) and accepting caste system and thereby introducing the system of stratification in the community.
2. The community is hierarchically divided in four segments on the basis of ritual superiority which resembles Hindu *varna* framework. There is functional distribution of occupations among the four divisions like the four *varnas*—hunting and fighting, worshipping, cultivation, and dancing and singing respectively. The difference is that while in the *varna* system, worshipping occupies the highest ritual status, in this tribe it occupies second place in the hierarchy. Secondly, purity and pollution is absent in the Sabaras tribe as it is found in the caste system. Thus, Sabaras are accepted as a separate 'caste' and not as a tribe in the village.
3. Like the caste system among the Sabaras too, each sub-caste has its own panchayat which acts as a watch-dog of the community customs and taboos.
4. Each sub-division of the Sabaras claims descent from three Sabaras who figure in Hindu mythologies—Mahabharat and Ramayana.
5. The imprint of Hindu culture is prominent on the marriage customs of Sabaras, though inter-caste (inter-segment) marriage is absent. Polygamy is a taboo. Bride-price has been replaced by dowry.

Why the adopting of Hindu traits by the Sabaras is termed as a process of 'acculturation' and not 'sanskritisation' is because (a) the benefit of acculturation is 'economic gain' and not achieving higher ritual status. By entering the Hindu-fold as a caste group, they have been assigned the occupation of wood-cutting and basket making permanently. After deforestation, they have become agricultural labourers; and (b) the model adopted for mobility is not Brahmanic but Vaishya,

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which assures economic superiority to ritual superiority. Since the Sabaras are dependent on Telis for their occupations, they accepted them (Telis) as their reference group.

If we examine change in the culture of tribes in India, we find six main changes. These are as follows:

1. The lifestyle of tribals, particularly those who live in or near the urban areas or in the midst of the numerically dominant non-tribal population, has changed due to imbibing of a large number of cultural traits of advanced Hindus. Many of their traditional traits have been replaced by alien traits.
2. The nature of change is such that the tribes are not losing their identity and also their traditional cultural heritage. They are not being 'Hinduised'. However, tribals undergoing the process of Hinduisation have been pointed out by Bose (1953), Dutta Majumdar (1937), Deogaonkar (1990), Raha and Debash Roy (1997:153), referring to the examples of tribes like Pati Rabhas (in Assam), Hos and Juangs (in Orissa), Santhals (in Bihar), Bhumij, Oraon, Munda, and Korkus (in Maharashtra), etc. Our contention is that adopting few cultural traits of Hindus is not undergoing the process of Hinduisation. The fact that these tribes still describe themselves as 'tribes' and not Hindus is important in our argument and contention of rejecting the process of Hinduisation.
3. In some parts of India, the tribals have adopted some traits of Christianity also. Nagas, Mizo, Santhals, Oraon, Munda, Kharia, etc., are some tribes in North East and North West India on which we find marked imprint of Christianity. The evidence is provided by micro-level studies of tribals made by Dutta Majumdar (1956), Sahay (1976), Sachchidananda (1964) and Bose (1967).
4. The changes among tribal people from Chotanagpur working as labourers in tea gardens of Assam and North Bengal are more visible in their material life than in their religious beliefs and practices. Those who work in industries have developed individualistic outlook due to the economic security provided to them which in turn has made them indifferent towards their traditional life.
5. Agro-industrialisation in the tribal areas has affected the socio-cultural life of the tribals to the extent that changes in the family structure, marriage institution, authority structure, interpersonal relationships and weakening of clan panchayat's authority have come to be observed (Kar, 1981). Trade unions also have much impact on the *adibasi* (tribal) labourers. Tribal labourers have organised them-selves as a 'class' which has ultimately opened up a wider opportunity for taking part in active politics. The tribals who work in mines and collieries since long fail to retain link with their community because of which they are so compelled to adjust themselves with the rhythm of mining work, that they relinquish many traditional beliefs and social practices and adopt new attitudes and behaviour patterns. Sachchidananda (1964) has referred to such changes among Munda and Oraon tribes of Bihar. R. Chandra (1989) has also referred to similar change in the socio-cultural life of Juangs and Irula tribes in Orissa who traditionally were accustomed to hunting, food-gathering and shifting cultivation but have now become settled cultivators and labourers on plantations. They have attained progressive outlook and have started using modern facilities of schools, banks, cooperative societies, medicare, etc.
7. Discarding traditional practices and adopting modern beliefs and values due to the impact of modern forces has not always proved functional for the tribals. Many tribes face the problem of maladjustment. Baiga tribe according to R. Joshi (1984) is one such tribe whose members earlier were fun-loving and contented, who spent evenings in dancing and drinking mahua, who owned land but had no demarcated 'pattas', whose women wore gold and silver ornaments without worry and fear but have now become very fearful and have come to be cheated by people with vested interests. Happiness has given place to suffering.

Thus, it is evident that tribals have changed a lot culturally, socially as well as economically due to exposure to various forces which having benefited them in many ways have also brought a number of evils in their communities. Many tribals have come to be deprived of their rights over

land and forests and in many cases they are being fleeced by money lenders, big landowners, traders, businessmen and others. In spite of this, we cannot support ideas of scholars like Verrier Elwin who advocated keeping tribals in partial or full isolation and strongly advised that these people should be allowed to maintain their traditional and original tribal life as far as possible. While we do not want tribal culture to be destroyed, at the same time, we do not want that tribes should remain 'backward' and not be benefited by industrial development, occupational mobility, education and benefits of welfare schemes. The isolated and segregated condition of the tribal world which results in their poverty, illiteracy, exploitation, etc., cannot be tolerated in this age. Their exposure to justice, enlightenment, help and cooperation is essential.


### Displacement and Resettlement of Tribals

During recent years, displacement of tribals has drawn the attention of several scholars. It is estimated that development schemes like dams, mines, industries and various projects have resulted in the displacement of about 40 per cent tribals between 1951 and 1991 (Fernandes, 1994:24). The illiterate and powerless tribals have been compelled to leave their resource-rich regions and migrate to other places. This has resulted in the problem of their resettlement. One estimate is that about 20 per cent of the STs have been rehabilitated. In Maharashtra and Gujarat under the 'land for land' scheme, only 15 per cent of about 10,000 eligible tribal families were granted land (*Ibid*:36). This has resulted in impoverishment and marginalisation of tribals. In many areas, tribals have resisted the take-over of their support system and started agitations. Such tribal agitations have been reported from Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and so on. Surprisingly, tribals agitate more than the high caste non-tribal farmers, even though they are illiterate and less organised. This can be explained in terms of difference in the extent of dependence on natural resources, exposure to external society, nature of leadership among them and the benefits they expect from the project (Fernandes in George Pfeffer, 1997:82). Tribals resist these projects because much of their food and other daily needs are met by the forests and the shifting cultivation in forests. This dependence on forests develops a symbolic relationship of the tribals with the source of their livelihood. The second reason is inadequacy of benefits. No compensation is paid for the forests because what the tribals consider common property land is in fact government land. Even the compensation for the little individual land they own is very low (say, about Rs. 3,000 per acre). What little amount they get is appropriated by money-lenders and middlemen. They are thus left impoverished. The third reason is that their literacy is so low that they cannot hope to get jobs in the new project. At most they get temporary jobs of unskilled labourers. All these reasons compel them to agitate against new projects and being displaced from their native lands.

### Integration and Assimilation

The British administrators like Dalton, Risley and others talked of 'Hinduised tribes' and 'Hinduised section of the tribe'. They referred to a number of cultural traits which tribal people have adopted from the neighbouring Hindus. Have the welfare and the development programmes drawn the Adivasis to the fore of the national front? Have they been able to elevate their social position? It has been accepted by many scholars that the gap between tribals and non-tribals is partly the result of political policy of the imperial colonial power and partly because the non-tribals considered the tribals ethnically and culturally distinct from the rest of the population. As such, the demands of the Adivasis after Independence for distinctive treatment and even autonomy were valid. Anthropologists sympathetically endorsed this demand. The census officers were emphatic about their religious distinction. They designated them as animists. Ethnologists pointed out their racial background and ethnic traits. But according to Ghurye, on the cultural and linguistic plane, the tribals are not markedly different from the neighbouring non-tribal or Hindu rural communities. This viewpoint has been supported Majumdar and Aiyappan. Some tribes like Mizos, Khasis, Nagas, Mundas, Meenas, Bhils, etc., have become somewhat modernised but some have still remained 'backward'. Their techno-economic backwardness and their sticking to traditional cultural values have remained a barrier to their integration in Hindu society.

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Many tribal groups moved out of their semi-isolated habitats and entering plains accepted many norms of the Hindu caste system. The large number of social reform and religious movements among the tribals are evidence of their desire to get absorbed in the Hindu caste system.

The question is: do measures taken by the government aim at total assimilation of the tribals in the main stream of the national life or at social integration by conveying the concern for protecting their interests, customs and institutions, safeguarding their ways of life, and ensuring their development? It appears that various plans and programmes aim at protecting them against social injustice and exploitation and the raising of their general way of life. The creation of tribal areas, reservation of seats in educational institutions and public services, introduction of TMS scheme – all aim at uplift of the tribals and their social and cultural integration in Hindu society. But ‘integration’ should not be confused with ‘homogeneity’ through the process of assimilation. We should be clear about three processes of change, viz., acculturation, integration (social and cultural) and assimilation.

Tribes are faced with the problem of preserving their cultural identity and their social existence. Each tribe has three alternatives: (i) to exist side by side with the majority, (ii) to absorb itself in the dominant group, and (iii) to secede and seek political independence on the basis of equality. Different tribes have adopted different processes from amongst the above-mentioned three processes. For example, the Bhils and the Meenas have adopted the first process of co-existence, the Oraon and the Rhond tribes have adopted the second process of absorbing themselves in the Hindu society, while the Nagas and the Mizos have adopted the third process of secession. Our government has not adopted a uniform policy of cultural integration of all tribes because different tribes are at different stages of development and have different goals and aspirations. Naturally we find different levels of integration of different tribes. We can only hold that tribes are gradually being drawn into the wider economic frame-work of the country and they are getting themselves involved in the market economy. Agriculture has come to occupy a central place in the economic activity of many tribes. According to the 1991 census figures, about three-fourth of the tribals in the country work as cultivators and about one-fifth as agricultural labourers and the rest as labourers in mines, forests or are engaged in other services. The fact that the tribal cultivators are responding positively to modern methods of cultivation points out a positive change in tribals’ economic system. The economic integration of the tribes, however, does not necessarily mean that all tribes have achieved a high level of income. Many are still living below the poverty line.

## 2.2 Village Communities in India

About 74 per cent of India’s population lives in villages. The incidence of poverty is much higher in villages – roughly 39 per cent of the rural population are poor. Agriculture is a source of livelihood for 70 per cent of the population but agriculture accounts for less than 40 per cent of the national income. One of the reasons for this is the unequal distribution of land. Ten to 20 percent of landholders hold 70 percent of the total land and 50 percent of landholders are marginal farmers with less than one hectare (2.471 acres) of land. Thus, any agenda for fighting poverty must address itself to the rural sector. No doubt our policy-makers have always been emphasising agricultural and rural development ever since the planning process was initiated in 1952. But how far have we been able to alleviate poverty in villages?

Poverty can also be measured by the persons’ access to piped water, electricity, *kutcha* or *pucca* houses, and the public distribution system. A staggering 55 per cent of the rural population of the country still live in *kutcha* houses. Further, in most backward states (like West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), 15 to 19 per cent rural homes have electricity, 9 to 11 per cent have piped water and 11 to 16 per cent have access to public distribution system.

## Causes of Rural Poverty

On the basis of an empirical study in seven districts in Rajasthan in 1996 sponsored by the World Bank, the following causes of poverty in rural areas were identified:

1. Inadequate and ineffective implementation of anti-poverty programmes.
2. Low percentage of population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits.
3. Non-availability of irrigational facilities and erratic rainfall in several districts.
4. Low agricultural productivity resulting from dependence on traditional methods of cultivation and inadequate modern skills.
5. Non-availability of electricity for agricultural as well as industrial use in most of the villages.
6. Poor quality of livestock.
7. Imperfect and exploited credit market. Lack of link roads, communication facilities and markets (*i.e.*, infrastructure).
8. Low level of education. The general literacy level in the rural areas in the country is low (42.85%) while for females it is very low (24.85%).
9. Absence of dynamic community leadership.
10. Failure to seek women's cooperation in developmental activities and associating them with planned programmes.
11. Intercaste conflicts and rivalries.
12. Spending a large percentage of annual earnings on social ceremonies like marriage, death feast, etc., and people being unwilling to discard expensive customs.

These causes may be grouped together in four categories and explained through a model.

### *Some Effective Strategies for Alleviating Rural Poverty*

For reducing poverty in the rural areas, following strategies may be suggested:

1. Strengthening credit disbursing agencies.
2. Providing cheap power supply for agricultural and industrial use.
3. Activating cooperative societies for selling products of household industries.
4. Making allocations in poverty alleviation programmes (PAPs) flexible and sanctioning special allocations to districts/blocks/villages showing good results.
5. Integrating varied PAPs in one or two schemes and making availability of benefits easier.
6. Developing human resources by focusing on education, health and skill programmes.
7. Introducing double distributive system for the destitutes and the extremely poor.
8. Creating social awareness to arrest increasing debt growth among the poor.
9. Improving animal husbandry and developing dairy and poultry farming.
10. Activating panchayats to focus on adult education programme, road construction and maintaining tree plantations.
11. Activating NGOs in role-play like digging of tanks, tree plantations, training of youth, imparting skills to women, creating social awareness among the people, and so forth.

## Bonded Labour

A man keeping another man in perpetual bondage for his selfish and personal designs is a kind of man's cruelty to man which is not confined to a particular country or a particular region but is found as a global phenomenon for thousands of years, right from the Biblical days to the present era. The nomenclature changed from period to period and place to place: slave, serf, and bonded labour. In India, this type of exploitation of man remained prevalent in the name of *begar* and *ryot* for years. The term 'bonded labour' or *bandhua mazdoor* is of recent origin. Despite the abolition of the *zamindari* system, land reforms, *Bhoodan* movement, enactment of legislation (Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1976), establishment of *Panchayati Raj*, interest shown by Social Action Groups and



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spirited individuals from society, lakhs of bonded labourers continue to be exploited and carry the yoke of neglect, suffering and frustration in abject silence. In fact, the system of bonded labour, as prevalent in Indian society, is a relic of feudal hierarchical society. A considerable interest has come to be shown in bonded labour during the past two decades by social workers, social scientists and the government because it is considered incompatible with our social ideal of egalitarianism with our commitment to human rights. The magnitude of bonded labour is just baffling as lakhs of adult males and females as well as children are condemned to suffering under its yoke.

*The Concept*

We have to understand the terms 'bonded labour system' and 'bonded labour'. The 'bonded labour system' refers to "the relationship between a creditor and a debtor who obtains loan owing to economic compulsions confronting his day-to-day life, and agrees to abide by the terms dictated by the creditor". The important term of agreement is that the debtor agrees to mortgage his services or services of any or all the members of his family for a specified or unspecified period. The relationship built on the agreement is on such unequal terms that while for every labour or service, there must be some fair remuneration equivalent to the price of labour in the market, under the bonded labour system, the service is rendered for the debt or in lieu of the interest accruing to the debt. The debtor either works without receiving any remuneration or if at all there is any remuneration, it is much less than the minimum wage (notified under the Minimum Wages Act) or the prevailing rate of market wage.

The 1976 Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act defines 'bonded labour system' as "the system of forced labour under which a debtor enters into an agreement with the creditor that he would render service to him either by himself or through any member of his family or any person dependent on him, for a specified or unspecified period, either without wages or for nominal wages, in consideration of loan or any other economic consideration obtained by him or any of his ascendants, or in pursuance of any social obligation, or in pursuance of any obligation devolving on him by succession". The agreement has other consequences too, such as, forfeiting the debtor the freedom of employment, denial of freedom of movement in any part of the country, and denial of the right to sell at market value any of his property or product of his labour.

The term 'bonded labour' has been defined by the National Commission on Labour as "labour which remains in bondage for a specific period for the debt incurred". The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes explained the term bonded labour in its 24th report as "persons who are forced to work for the creditors for the loan incurred either without wage or on nominal wage" (Sharma, 1990:52). The 'bonded labour' is different from 'contract labour' employed in industries, mines, plantations and docks, etc. Contract labour includes workers who are not directly recruited by the establishment, whose names do not appear on the pay-roll and who are not paid wages directly by the employer. In theory, contract labourers in India are covered by the Factory Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and the Dock Workers Act, 1948 so as to give them benefits as are admissible to labour directly employed. However, the advantages of employing both bonded labour and contract labour are the same: (i) labour is engaged at a lower cost, (ii) the employers have not to extend fringe benefits to the workers, and (iii) the employers are not under any obligation of providing welfare and security measures to the workers as stipulated in various Acts. The system of contract labour in our country was abolished in September 1970 by an Act called 'Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act'.

The two basic features of bonded labour are: indebtedness and forced labour. Forced labour can hereditarily descend from father to son or be passed on for generations together. During the period of bondage, the debtor cannot seek employment with any other person. In economic terms, this means that he cannot 'sell his labour in the market at market value'. The bonded labour system is mostly found among agricultural labourers in villages, though today it has extended to workers working in stone quarries, brick kilns, bidi factories, glass factories and in detergent, carpet, gem stones and many other factories.

Bonded labourers are known by different names in different parts of India. For example, in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka they are known as 'Jeetbams', in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh as 'Halis', in

Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh as 'Kabadis' in Hyderabad as 'Bhagela', in Rajasthan as 'Saggris' in Bihar as 'Kamias' or 'Kamiantis', in Orissa as 'Gothees', in Tamil Nadu as 'Pandiyals', in Kerala as 'Adiyas', 'Paniyas', and 'Kattu-naikens', and in Uttar Pradesh as 'Koltas'.

#### Causes of Bonded Labour

Though the main causes of origin, growth and perpetuation of bonded labour system are economic, the social and religious factors too support the custom. The *economic* causes include: extreme poverty of people, inability to find work for livelihood, inadequate size of the landholdings to support family, lack of alternative small-scale loans for the rural and urban poor, natural calamities like drought, floods etc., destruction of men and animals, absence of rains, drying away of wells, meagre income from forest produce, and inflation and constant rising prices. The *social* factors include: high expenses on occasions like marriage, death, feast, birth of a child, etc., leading to heavy debts, caste-based discrimination, lack of concrete social welfare schemes to safeguard against hunger and illness, non-compulsory and unequal educational system, and indifference and corruption among government officials. Sometimes, exploitation by some persons in a village also compels people to migrate to some other place and seek not only employment on the employer's conditions but also get protection from influential persons. Illiteracy, ignorance, immaturity and lack of skill and professional training sustain such beliefs. Broadly speaking, it may be maintained that bondage originates mainly from economic and social pressures (Sharma, 1990:52).



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Religious arguments are used to convince the people of low castes that religion enjoins upon them to serve people of high castes.

#### The Legislation

The pernicious and inhuman, callous, reprehensible practice of bonded labour existed in many states in India. After independence, it could not be allowed to continue to blight national life any longer.

However, no serious effort was made to give effect to this Article and stamp out the shocking practice of bonded labour. The Forced Labour (Abolition) Convention adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1919 was ratified by India only in November 1954. Some states in India had also enacted laws for abolishing bonded labour. For example, the Bihar Kamianti Act was passed in 1920, the Madras Agency Debt Bondage Regulation in 1940, Kabadi System Regulation in Bastar in Madhya Pradesh in 1943, Hyderabad Bhagela Agreement Regulation in 1943, Orissa Debt Bonded Abolition Regulation in 1948, Rajasthan Sagri System Abolition Act in 1961 (which was amended in 1975), and Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, Kerala in 1975. It was specifically laid down in most of these regulations (like those of Madras, Orissa, Bihar, and Hyderabad) that the agreement between the creditor and the debtor entered into after the commencement of the regulation was to be wholly void if (a) the full terms of the agreement were not expressed in writing and a copy thereof was not filed with the designated authority, (b) the expressed and implied period of labour exceeded one year, (c) the interest provided for was not simple interest over one year, and (d) the interest exceeded 6.25 per cent per annum. But it was after the announcement of the 20-point programme on July 1, 1975 that the legislative exercise at the national level began with some amount of seriousness and urgency. The ordinance was enacted in October 1975 which was later replaced by the Act passed in February 1976, called the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act. All the state laws became inoperative after the enactment of the Act by the union government in 1976.

The Act implies: (i) identification of bonded labourers; (ii) release of bonded labourers; (iii) action against offenders, i.e., creditors who had forced agreement upon the debtors; (iv) holding of regular meetings of vigilance committees at the district and tehsil level; (v) maintenance of the prescribed registers; and (vi) conferring of judicial powers to executive magistrates. The Act also

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provides for the rehabilitation of bonded labourers who are freed from their creditors. The 1976 Act was amended in 1985 in which it was clarified that the contract workers and inter-state migrant workers, if they fulfil the conditions laid down in the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, will be considered as bonded labour.

The main problem that is faced in the implementation of the 1976 Act is the identification of bonded labourers. Neither the administrators at the district and *tehsil* levels admit the existence of bonded labourers in their areas nor do the creditors accept that any bonded workers are serving them, nor are the workers themselves willing to give statements that they are being forced to work as bonded labourers since long. It is the social workers attached to non-political social action groups and voluntary organisations who identify the bonded labourers. The other handicap which aggravates the problem is the economic rehabilitation of the released labourers. The economic rehabilitation includes: finding jobs for them, getting them minimum wages, giving them training in arts and crafts, allotment of agricultural land, helping them in developing the allotted land, helping them in the processing of forest produce, educating them and their children, arranging for their medical care, etc. All these are Herculean tasks. Besides ensuring economic rehabilitation, the state governments are also expected to arrange for their psychological rehabilitation and integration of various schemes of central and state governments. In chalking out plans and strategies of rehabilitation, the freed labourers are to be given the choice between various alternatives (Sharma, 1990:54).



*Did u know?* When the Constitution of India was framed, Article 23 was enshrined in it which prohibited 'traffic in human beings', 'begar' and other similar forms of forced labour.

**Misery and Suffering in Bondage**

One former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (Justice P.N. Bhagwati) described bonded labourers as 'non-beings, exiles of civilisation living a life worse than that of animals', for the animals are at least free to roam about as they like and they can plunder or garb food whenever they are hungry, but these outcastes of society are held in bondage and robbed of their freedom even. They are consigned to an existence where they have to live either in hovels or under the open sky and be satisfied with whatever unwholesome food they can manage to get, inadequate though it may be to fill their hungry stomachs. Not having any choice, they are driven by poverty and hunger into a life of bondage, a dark bottomless pit from which, in a cruel exploitative society, they cannot hope to be rescued (*Yojana*, May 1-15, 1987:32-33).

It is estimated that there are about 32 lakh bonded labourers in India. Of these, 98 per cent are said to be bonded due to indebtedness and 2 per cent due to customary social obligations. The highest number is believed to exist in three states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, followed by Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. According to the figures released in May 1997 on the basis of a state government-sponsored survey (conducted as per the Supreme Court-direction), Tamil Nadu has the maximum number of 24,000 bonded labourers, in the country, engaged in 30 different occupations (*The Hindustan Times*, May 13, 1997). It has been pointed out that the majority of bonded labourers work as agricultural labour in villages and belong to the outcaste or tribal communities. Of the total labour force in the rural areas, about 33 per cent are engaged in non-agricultural activities, 42 per cent work as cultivators, and 25 per cent as agricultural labourers. Of those who work as agricultural labourers, 48 per cent belong to Scheduled Castes and 33 per cent to Scheduled Tribes. Being unskilled and unorganised, agricultural labourers have little for their livelihood other than personal labour. Bonded agricultural labourers occupy the lowest rung of the rural ladder. Social and economic stratification in a village is linked with land and caste which in turn govern economic and social status of the people. Bonded labourers thus live in pitiable and miserable conditions. They are socially exploited because though in theory

they are assured food, clothes, free tobacco, etc., in practice they get the food that is left over, and clothes that are discarded by family members. They are made to work for 12 to 14 hours a day and are forced to live with cows and buffaloes in shed. If they fall ill, they may be procured some medicines from the local *Hakim* depending upon the sweet will of the employer.

The total number of bonded labourers identified and freed in India by March 1989 was 2.42 lakhs, of whom 2.18 lakhs (i.e., 90%) were said to be rehabilitated also (*Yojana*, May 1989:23). Thus, hardly 8 per cent of total bonded workers in India have been identified so far, indicating lack of interest of state governments in solving the problem of bonded labour.

### **Rehabilitation**

Getting bonded labourers identified and freed was the statutory obligation of the state governments only but from November 1987 onwards, voluntary organisations also came to be authorised both for identification and rehabilitation. Of the 2.18 lakh bonded labourers rehabilitated up to March 1989, three-fourths were in four states of Orissa (23.8%), Karnataka (23.3%), Tamil Nadu (17.1%) and Uttar Pradesh (12.1%), one-fifth in three states of Andhra Pradesh (11.1%), Bihar (5.2%) and Madhya Pradesh (3.5%), and the remaining 4 per cent in three states in Rajasthan (3.2%), Maharashtra (0.4%) and Kerala (0.4%) (*Indian Labour Journal*, August 1989:1277). There is also a provision in the 20-point programme (of 1986) regarding the identification and rehabilitation of the bonded labour. Under this programme, the Government of India issued instructions in August 1986 to the Deputy Director General (Labour Welfare) of all the states to take follow-up action. Since then, the Union Ministry of Labour has been monitoring and evaluating the programme of identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers from time to time.

Rehabilitation is both physical and psychological. Physical rehabilitation is essentially economic whereas psychological rehabilitation has to be built up through a process of assurance and reassurance. The two must go side by side. The first prerequisite of psychological rehabilitation is that the freed bonded labourers must be wrenched away from the old habitat and be rehabilitated at a place where they will no longer be subject to the ruinous influence of the erstwhile bonded labour-keepers. Unless they are psychologically assured that after release from bondage, debt will not regulate their destiny any longer, there is every possibility that they may slide back to debt bondage.

Basically, there are three phases of rehabilitation: (i) immediate physical subsistence after release; (ii) short-term measures to help the freed workers to start a new life (for example, allotment of a house site, assistance for construction of a house, allotment of a plot of agricultural land, supplying a pair of bullocks and agricultural implements, or provision of avenues of gainful employment, etc.); and (iii) long-term measures (such as, arranging credit, training in new skills, developing existing skills, providing a remunerative price support, ensuring non-formal literacy of adult members and formal literacy for children, securing medical care, protection of civil rights...). It is thus rehabilitation which will give the freed bonded labourers the status of human beings so that they may be able to identify themselves with the mainstream of a civilised human society and realise the dignity worthy of human existence.

### **Lacunae in Effective Rehabilitation**

Qualitatively reviewing the implementation of the rehabilitative programmes for bonded labourers in different states, we find that while some states, like Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh point out the welcome features of identification and rehabilitation, some other states need to introduce innovative changes. The following visible lacunae in the implementation of the programme need to be dealt with immediately:

Firstly, instead of treating the programme in isolation as the programme of a particular ministry/department, there has to be coordination among various ministries/departments concerned like those of agriculture, animal husbandary, irrigation, forest, fisheries, etc., so that the programme is dealt with as an integrated national programme. *Secondly*, since the social milieu and the social structures which prompted the bonded labour system in the past continue to dominate the village life and its economy even today, they need to be probed and changed with commitment. *Thirdly*,

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the development departments are so much burdened with schemes like IRDP, JRY, TRYSEM, etc., that their programmes mostly remain time-bound and target-oriented without taking into account the needs, aptitudes and preferences of the beneficiaries.

The *group-approach* to development will bring the freed bonded labourers together, enable them to pool their resources, get help from various agencies, departments and banks, and integrate themselves for a common purpose for a qualitative and permanent rehabilitation. Such a 'group-effort' can be land-based, craft-based or asset-based for success. This requires proper selection of beneficiaries, the place where they are to be rehabilitated, selection of skills to be taught to them, and building awareness among the beneficiaries themselves and converting them into willing partners in a joint venture for their rehabilitation, progress and advancement.

***Effective Concern***

The plight of bonded labourers continues to be a serious social problem and a matter of concern for public, government, judiciary, social scientists and social workers. If about 17 lakh crimes in a year, for which about 26 lakh persons are arrested under the IPC, are considered a serious issue for the Indian society, freeing of three million bonded labourers must be viewed as a very crucial issue. For this purpose, it is necessary that researches be sponsored by different funding agencies to ascertain the extent and the nature of the problem, examine handicaps in identification, utility of various rehabilitation schemes, coordination of activities between central government and voluntary organisations, necessity of amending the 1976 Act, determining responsibilities and accountability of the concerned officers, and introducing after-care programmes for the freed bonded labourers. Unless serious efforts are taken to save bonded labourers from ruthless exploitation by vested interests, the problem will continue to be a social menace. The total abolition of the system of bonded labour through legislation may not be feasible in the foreseeable future, yet doing away with the legislation may cause further distress to the victims. Removing poverty, unemployment and illiteracy, which are believed to be the three basic causes of bonded labour system, is also not easy. The formulation of future plans, programmes and projects for bonded labourers would require a broad approach and action at various levels.

The problem of bonded labour has, thus, to be fought at various fronts/social, psychological and legal. We have to educate the exploited not to succumb to pressure tactics. We have to tell the exploiters that law cannot be circumvented and has to take its course in democratic India. We have to create committed opinion among the masses. We have to involve not only intellectuals but also the enlightened citizens to carry the message to those who matter. We have to enforce laws rigidly. We have also to impress upon politicians to tackle the issue with concerted interest and missionary zeal. The system based on exploitation by a few socially and economically powerful persons, trading on the misery and suffering of large numbers of men and holding them in bondage constitutes a shameful feature of our national life. The bondage of the economically impoverished segments of society for a small debt is totally incompatible with the egalitarian socio-economic order promised to Indians. Wiping out this system is basic and crucial to human dignity and is in conformity with constitutional values.

**Land Reforms: Nature and Social Consequences**

***Land Reforms***

The important land reforms introduced after independence in our country are: (1) abolition of zamindari system; (2) accepting the fundamental principle that lands belonged to those who do the tilling; (3) enacting Land Ceiling Act; (4) encouraging Bhoodan and Sarvodaya movements; and (5) devising suitable rational basis for obtaining land revenue. The proposal 'land belonging to the tiller' was meant to redistribute rural income to the advantage of those who work in the fields and to the disadvantage of those who do not. Another effect of this proposal was that control of a very considerable amount of land was to pass from rent-receivers to tenants, crop-shares and labourers. What were the possible measures to effect this proposal through legislation? (i) to provide that at the death of non-tilling owners, their rights in land could pass only to those who already are actual tillers, or (ii) the legislation might lay down that no further transfers of



agricultural land may occur except to those who are now tillers and who propose to till the land with their own hands, or (iii) to take away forthwith the rights in the land of non-tiller landowners and compensation be provided to them or providing them re-habilitation grants to take up other occupations. But the programme of abolishing proprietary rights was not easy to implement.

### ***Bhoodan Movement***

With the disappointing progress of legislative land reform, Acharya Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan (land-gift) movement offered a promising way forward. The focus was on improving the position of the landless. Assuming that there were 50 million landless peasants in India, Vinobaji set himself the task of collecting land-gifts of 50 million acres so that one acre could be given to each landless peasant. He called upon the landowners to give to the Bhoodan movement one-sixth of their holdings. Since roughly 300 million acres were under cultivation in 1951 in India, the gifts would have totalled up to the required 50 million acres. These gifts were then to be distributed to the landless under the guidance of Bhoodan workers. The movement got off to a good start as within three years (1952 to 1954) more than 3 million acres of land were received as Bhoodan. However, the movement soon slowed down. It was found that much of the land donated was rocky, barren or otherwise agriculturally poor or was under dispute in litigation. Further, distribution of land created more problems. Out of a total of 3.75 million acres of land received by May 1955, about 0.2 million acres (or 5%) could be redistributed. The district and *taluk* leaders were far from enthusiastic. They associated themselves with the Bhoodan only to enlarge or strengthen their following. Vinobaji resisted these efforts. The appeal was to the rich and landed peasants who opposed all types of land reform in their vested interests. Thus, like ceilings, Bhoodan also failed.

### ***The Green Revolution***

The green revolution which aimed at increase in agricultural productivity, was brought about in 1966. The introduction of high-yielding varieties of wheat, rice, maize, millet, etc., benefited the larger landholder more than the small landholder. This was because it required a reliable supply of water, costly fertiliser, high quality of seed, and pesticides, and use of machinery. These could be afforded only by the richer farmers. According to P.C. Joshi (1974:33) in Punjab, Haryana and some other regions, the trend that emerged was that small landowners rented their land to big farmers who needed a larger landspread to use their machinery profitably. On the one hand, this enriched the larger landholder, on the other hand, it increased the number of landless labourers most of whom are low caste and untouchables.

Before independence, though about 70 per cent of the rural population was engaged in agriculture yet agricultural production was so low that we were dependent on foreign countries for our food supply. The low agricultural production was the result of British policy of collecting land revenue, lack of use of modern technology in agriculture, lack of credit facilities to small owners of land, exploitation of small cultivators by zamindars and jagirdars, and lack of interest on the part of cultivators to accept new models of cropping. The result of the British policy of land revenue was that many cultivators who were unable to pay taxes had either to sell or mortgage their land or turn for help to money lenders. Because of this, the proportion of landless and land labourers increased from 13 per cent of the rural population in 1891 to 38 per cent in 1951 (Patel, 1952). When population of the country in the early 1950s was growing at the rate of 0.67 per cent, the agricultural output was growing at the rate of 0.5 per cent. The land reforms introduced after independence further led to the concentration of land in the hands of the larger landowners. The principle of land reform was 'land to the tiller'. The large landowners, anticipating this type of legislation, had got evicted long-term tenants prior to the enactment of legislation. Many tenants had voluntarily given up their land rights to the owners out of fear. Thereafter, the large land-owner rented out his land to short-term or seasonal tenants, or cultivated it himself with the help of casual labour. By 1953-54, the upper 10 per cent of landowners owned more than half of the land, 47 per cent owned less than 1 acre per household, and 23 per cent were landless. The agricultural production which was growing at the rate of 3 per cent per year in 1951-52 increased to 6 per cent in 1994-95, 10 per cent in 1996-97, but decreased to 6 per cent in 1998-99 (*India Today*, March 8,

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1999: 18-19). It is estimated that using high-yield techniques, the upper 10 per cent of land-holders could produce enough food to feed urban and other non-agricultural population of India. This means that about 48 million cultivators' families would be pushed off the land. This is a wrong assumption. Commercialisation of agriculture and the green revolution of last three decades would neither affect the cultivators adversely nor spell the demise of patronage system in the villages.

### Planned Rural Development

Two types of policies affect rural life: (i) production-oriented activities targeting production and services, e.g., subsidised fertilisers, providing irrigation, credit, locating village industries, and so on; and (ii) non-production oriented activities targeting living standards. The first type of activities are defined as rural development measures. These activities may affect either the whole community or a particular section of the community. Examples of the former type of activities are: community development projects (1952), Panchayati Raj (1962), land reforms (1950s), poverty alleviation programmes (PAPs) like Integrated Rural Development Programme (1978) etc., while of the latter type of activities are Tribal Development Programme (1959), Drought-prone Area Programme (1979), Desert Development Programme (1977), Food for Work Programme (1977), National Rural Employment Programme (1980), TRYCEM, etc. (Sagar, 1990:251-261). Some programmes aimed at increasing assets (including increasing production) and benefitting people economically, e.g., IRDP, Minimum Agricultural Wage, Rural Employment Programme, etc., while others aimed at social uplift of people, e.g., zamindari abolition, land reforms, Panchayati Raj, TRYSEM, etc. Some programmes indeed aimed at poverty alleviation (e.g., self-employment programmes of NREP, DPAP, training programme of TRYSEM, etc.) while some others were politically motivated, e.g., Garibi Hatao and 20-point programme. However, the basic aims of achieving community participation, removal of social evils, and improving the quality of life have yet to be achieved.

### The Strategies

Three distinct strategies for rural development may be identified:

1. Initially, in the 1950s, policy-makers stressed maximisation of economic growth by stepping up investment assuming that the benefits arising out of it would 'trickle down' and diffuse among all sectors of the rural society. But in the 1970s, it was realised that the benefits of agricultural growth did not percolate to the rural poor.
2. This gave birth to the second approach led by structural school which suggested distribution of assets through land reforms, community development programmes and cooperative farming. But this also did not work.
3. Then came the idea in the 1980s that suggested attack on poverty through rural development programmes, such as IRDP, TRYSEM, NREP, and RLEGP which later on merged in JRY programme. Before analysing these anti-poverty programmes, we shall evaluate the role of Five Year Plans, and 20-Point Programme in poverty alleviation.

### The Five Year Plans

The Planning Commission set up in 1950 has been formulating Five Year Plans for India's development taking an overall view of the needs and resources of the country. The First Plan was launched in April 1951 and the Third Plan ended in March 1966. After this, there were three one year plans from April, 1966 to March 1969. The Fourth Plan started in April 1969 and the Ninth Plan started in April 1997 (though it got cabinet approval only in January 1999).

The *First Five Year Plan* (1951-56) aimed at achieving an all-round balanced development and accorded top priority to agriculture and irrigation investing 44.6 per cent of the total plan budget in this sector. This was to reduce the country's dependence on agricultural imports and save foreign exchange. However, the plan did give importance to the development of social welfare programmes. At the end of the plan, the country's national income increased by 18 per cent and per capita income by 11 per cent.

The *Second Five Year Plan* (1956-61) strongly felt that the benefits of development should accrue more to the relatively underprivileged sections of society and that there should be a progressive

reduction in the concentration of income. However, the performance of the plan did not justify the hopes that had been placed on it. Achievements in almost all sectors of the economy were lower than the plan targets. Consequently, as against a near 13 per cent fall in price index during the First Plan, the Second Plan witnessed a 12.5 per cent rise in the price level.

The *Third Five Year Plan* (1961-66) aimed at securing a marked advance towards self-sustaining growth. It listed a set of five objectives, namely, increase in annual national income by 5 per cent, self-sufficiency in agriculture, growth of basic industries (like steel, power, chemicals), maximum use of manpower resources, and decentralisation of economic power. Agriculture was once again given top priority and about 35 per cent of the outlay was allocated to this sector. The performance of the Third Plan was also as disheartening as that of the Second Plan. Over the five year period, the national income grew by 2.6 per cent as against the target of 5 per cent. In the agricultural sector also, the production suffered a setback.

The shape of the economy was in fact so bad at the end of the Third Plan that the Fourth Plan, which was to be launched in March 1966 had to be abandoned and was replaced by three Annual Plans. The three year period between 1966 and 1969, sometimes described as a period of 'plan holiday', was devoted to rectifying the ills that had crippled the planning process during the operation of the Third Plan. The main objective of the three Annual Plans was to continue the unfinished tasks of the Third Plan.

The *Fourth Five Year Plan* (1969-74) aimed at increasing national income by 5.5 per cent, creating economic stability, reducing inequalities in income distribution, and achieving social justice with equality. Simultaneous growth of both agricultural and industrial sectors was fully recognised under the Fourth Plan. But this plan could not ensure economic growth. Neither could it achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains, nor could the generation of employment opportunities make any significant dent in the widespread unemployment problem. The inflationary situation was also aggravated.

The *Fifth Five Year Plan* (1974-79) mainly aimed at removal of poverty and attainment of self-reliance. The plan also aimed at increase in employment opportunities, self-sufficiency, policy of minimum wages, removal of regional imbalances, and encouragement of exports. The plan ended during the Janata regime in 1978 instead of 1979 and the Sixth Plan was started as the 'rolling plan'. But when the Congress once again came to power in 1978, the period of the Fifth Plan, was described as being 1974 to 1979. The Fifth Plan however, could not achieve its targets in any field, except in increase of foodgrains.

The *Sixth Five Year Plan* (1980-85) was formulated after taking into account the achievements and shortcomings of the past three decades of planning. Removal of poverty was the foremost objective of the plan. Stress was laid on economic growth, elimination of unemployment, bringing down of inequality in the distribution of income, self-sufficiency in technology, raising the lifestyles of the weaker sections of society, improving the public distribution system, and control of the increasing population. This plan had a fairly convincing success. According to NSS (National Sample Survey), the proportion of people living below the poverty line declined from 48.3 per cent in 1977-78 to 36.9 per cent in 1984-85.

The *Seventh Five Year Plan* (1985-90) had three priorities of increasing food, work and productivity. With its emphasis on generating substantial productive employment, the Seventh Plan aimed at significant reduction in the incidence of poverty and improvement in the quality of life of the poor. However, this plan also failed totally in achieving its targets. There was a severe setback on the agricultural front, in the manufacturing sector, in creating employment, and in the balance of payments position of the country.

The *Eighth Five Year Plan* (1992-97) which was to be started in 1990 was actually enforced from April 1992. The 1990-91 and 1991-92 years were considered to be yearly plans. The plan was supposed to be oriented towards employment generation. The plan size was nearly double the previous plan but then all plans have been twice the size of the previous plans. The growth rate was also more or less what the previous plans aimed at. The fact that they rarely reached the target except in the First and Sixth Plans is a different matter. The Eighth Plan was thus no different from the earlier plans, and its results also were no different either.

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The *Ninth Five Year Plan* (1997-2002) was approved by the Cabinet only in January 1999. It is described as ambitious and growth-oriented. The plan's thrust areas are: agriculture, employment, poverty, and infrastructure. In agriculture, the top priority is to be given to irrigation. The efficiency and productivity of five infrastructure sectors—irrigation, power, mining, railways and communication—is also expected to improve. The plan is described as 'delivery-oriented'.

***Assessment of Five Year Plans***

If we make an appraisal of all the eight completed plans, we find that in the five decades of planning, all our plans have been oriented towards something, sometimes self-reliance in agricultural production, sometimes employment, sometimes industrial growth, and so on. But poverty and unemployment have always increased.

During this period of 48 years, the average rate of economic growth has been 3 per cent. Though it is not bad in comparison to the world's average of 4 per cent, it is definitely poor in comparison to the average of the developing countries of 7 per cent to 10 per cent. During 1951-1998, our annual national income had increased by about 3.5 per cent, agricultural production by 2.7 per cent, industrial production by 6.1 per cent, and the per capita consumption by 1.1 per cent. While the government claimed that the number of people below the poverty line had come down to 33 per cent by 1998, since the number of unemployed people had increased, we cannot concede that poverty has been contained. No wonder, more people feel frustrated today and the number of agitations is increasing every year.

***20-Point Programme***

Indira Gandhi announced this programme in July, 1975 for reducing poverty and economic exploitation and for the uplift of the weaker sections of society. The five important goals of this programme were: (a) controlling inflation, (b) giving impetus to production, (c) welfare of the rural population, (d) lending help to the urban middle classes, and (e) controlling social crimes. The programmes included in the 20-point programme were: increase in irrigational facilities, increase in programmes for rural employment, distribution of surplus land, minimum wages to landless labourers, rehabilitation of bonded labour, uplift of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, growth of housing facilities, increasing power production, formulating new programmes of family planning, tree plantation, extension of primary health facilities, programmes for the welfare of women and children, making primary education measures more effective, strengthening of public distribution system, simplification of industrial policies, control of black money, betterment of drinking water facilities, and developing internal resources.

***State Poverty Alleviation Programmes***

Several poverty alleviation programmes have been launched by the central government for the rural poor, comprising small and marginal farmers, landless labourers and rural artisans. The important programmes currently functioning are: IRDP (subsidies/loans for self-employment and supportive land-based activities like irrigation, animal husbandry, etc.), TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth in Skills for Self-Employment), Jawahar Rozgar Yojna (generating additional gainful employment for the rural unemployed and underemployed, and providing employment for 50 to 100 days in a year to at least one member in a poor family, NREP (wage employment in slack season), RLEGP (80 to 100 days of wage employment to every landless household), DPAP (area development of drought-prone areas), and DDP (area development of hot and cold deserts).

We will discuss each of these programmes separately.

***IRDP***

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) is a major instrument of the government to alleviate poverty. Its objective is to enable selected families to cross the poverty line by taking up self-employment ventures in a variety of activities like agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry in the primary sector, weaving and handicrafts in the secondary sector, and service and business activities in the tertiary sector. The aim of the IRDP is to see that a minimum stipulated number of families is enabled to cross the poverty line within the limits of a given



investment and in a given time-frame. Thus, the three variables involved are: (a) number of poor households, (b) resources available for investment, and (c) the time-span over which the investment would yield an income which would enable the family to cross the poverty line.

The IRDP was launched by the centre in March 1976 in 20 selected districts, but from October 1982 it was extended to all districts in the country. This programme considers a household as the basic unit of development. The functional aspect of this programme can be gauged from the fact that above 80 lakh households are said to have been assisted within five years – between 1993-94 and 1997-98 – in the matter of improving their economic conditions and rising above the poverty line. A number of institutions have undertaken studies with respect to the implementation and working of the IRDP. They point out flaws in the implementation of the programme. None of these studies have, however, questioned the utility of the programme. The main criticisms against this scheme are: (1) There are leakages in the programme and all assets created under IRDP are not with the poor. This is mainly because of three factors: (a) the poor are unable to pay large bribes, fill up complicated forms, influence the village headman and find ‘guarantors’ for themselves; (b) bank officials are often reluctant to deal with poor borrowers because they believe – rightly or wrongly – that giving loans to the poor is risky since recovery is often used as a major indicator of the performance of a particular branch of a rural bank; and (c) the poor themselves take inadequate interest in the programme because they are afraid of being cheated or of not being able to repay. (2) There is much corruption, misuse and malpractice in the implementation of the loan programme. The loans are often misallocated with little apparent violation of the guidelines of the schemes for (a) the guidelines make it clear that for fair allocation of loans, Gram Sabha (village assembly) meetings should be convened for selecting the beneficiaries but in practice this does not happen because the village headman and the Gram Sevaks act as intermediaries between the villagers and the administration; (b) bribing is a *spine qua non* of obtaining a loan; and (c) household surveys on which the list of eligible households are supposed to be based are conducted only once in five years. (3) The programme is household-based and is not integrated with the development needs or resource base of the area. Thus, the IRDP loan neither raises the living standards of the beneficiaries nor does it have any impact on rural poverty by raising the poor people above the poverty line. This has been indicated by studies in several, districts in Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. The latest study was conducted in seven districts in Rajasthan under a World Bank project on poverty. The reports were separately submitted by each district in April 1997. Similar studies have been planned in three other states also – West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

### **TRYSEM**

The scheme called Training Rural Youth for Self-Employment was started on August 15, 1979 to provide technical skills to the rural youth to enable them to seek employment in fields of agriculture, industry, services and business activities. Only youth in the age group of 18-35 and belonging to families living below the poverty line are eligible for training. Priority for selection is given to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe persons, ex-servicemen and those who are ninth pass. One-third seats are reserved for women. Stipend to the trainees ranges from Rs. 75 to Rs. 200 per month. On completion of training, TRYSEM beneficiaries are assisted under the IRDP. In four years between 1992-93 and 1995-96, about two lakh youths were trained every year, of whom about 45 per cent became self-employed and 30 per cent remained employed on wages (*Economic and Political Weekly*, 1995). The main criticisms against this programme are: (i) its coverage is very small in relation to need; (ii) skills provided have not been linked with rural industrialisation process. Training is provided on the basis of ad hoc considerations and skills imparted are of low level; and (iii) amount of stipend is rather inadequate to motivate the youth to go for training.

### **NREP**

The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) was planned for creating additional employment opportunities in the rural areas with the help of surplus foodgrains. Initially, this programme was called Food for Work Programme (FWP). It was drawn up at the end of 1976-77 but it actually came into effect on April 1, 1977. Under this scheme, millions of mandays of



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employment were created every year by utilising lakhs of tonnes of foodgrains. The works undertaken were flood protection, maintenance of existing roads, construction of new link roads, improvement of irrigation facilities, construction of *panchayat ghars*, school buildings, medical and health centres and improvement of sanitation conditions in the rural areas. On finding certain shortcomings in the programme, it (FWP) was restructured in October 1980 as part of the Sixth Plan (1980-85) and came to be known as NREP. It took care of those rural poor who largely depended on wage employment and virtually had no source of income in the lean agricultural period. The important points on which stress was laid in the implementation of this programme were: (1) 10 per cent allocation was earmarked exclusively for drinking water wells in harijan colonies and community irrigation schemes in Harijan areas. Likewise, another 10 per cent was earmarked for social forestry and fuel plantations. (2) Only such works were under-taken which had some durability. (3) Allocations were made both at the inter-state and inter-district/block levels. The central government released the state's share of the NREP allocation in cash every quarter. (4) Maintenance of assets created under this programme was the responsibility of the state governments. (5) PRIs were actively involved in this programme. This programme has now been merged in JRY.

### **RLEGP**

The Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) aimed at providing supplemental employment to the poor on public works at a very low wage of Rs. 3 per day. Maharashtra was one state which had used the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) for the unemployed in rural areas by levying EGS surcharge or collections on land revenue, sales tax, motor vehicles, irrigated holdings, and on professionals. The amounts so collected, with matching contributions from the state government, were credited to an EGS fund for taking up employment works. This programme too has now been merged (along with NREP) into the JRY.

### **Jawahar Rozgar Yojna**

This programme was announced in April 1989. Under the scheme, it is expected that at least one member of each poor family would be provided with employment for 50 to 100 days in a year at a work place near his/her residence. About 30 per cent of the jobs under this scheme are reserved for women. Both the rural wage employment programmes (i.e., the REP and the RLEGP) were merged in this scheme. Central assistance to the scheme is 80 per cent. The scheme is implemented through village panchayats. The central government claims that 3121.33 million mandays of employment were generated in various states between 1992-93 and 1995-96 under JRY at an outlay of Rs. 13,248 crore (*Rajasthan Patrika*, June 16, 1966). The scheme covers 46 per cent of our population.

### **Antyodaya Programme**

'Antyodaya' means development (*udaya*) of the people at the lowest level (*ant*), that is, the poorest of the poor. This programme was initiated by the Government of Rajasthan on October 2, 1977 for special assistance to the people below the poverty line. The idea was to select five of the poorest families from each village (out of 27,000 inhabited villages) every year and to help them in their economic betterment. Initially, a random survey was undertaken in 25 villages situated in different ecological regions of the state and information about individual families with regard to indebtedness, dependency ratio, physical assets of land, cattle, occupation, educational level, income and size of the family was collected. Thereafter, a detailed scheme of Antyodaya was drawn up. The economic criterion, in order of priority, for the selection of the poor families was laid down as: (1) families under severe destitution without any productive assets and with no member in the age-group of 15-59 years capable of any economic activity; (2) families without any productive assets of land or cattle but having one or more persons capable of working and with a per capita income up to Rs. 20 per month; (3) families having some productive assets with per capita income up to Rs. 30 per month; and (4) families having per capita income up to Rs. 40 per month.

The task of identification of the families was entrusted to the village assembly (Gram Sabha). Under this scheme, help was given in the form of allotting land for cultivation, monthly pension, bank loan or help in getting employment. Each selected family was given a pension of Rs. 30-40

per month. A bank loan was sanctioned for purchasing bullocks, carts, animal husbandry (purchasing buffaloes, cows, goats and pigs), basket making, purchasing carpentry tools, opening a tailor's shop or a tea shop or a barber's shop or a grocer's shop and for manufacturing activities like soap-making and niwar-making.

The administration of the Antyodaya scheme was entrusted to collectors at the district level, and to the Agriculture Department at the state level. The Government of Rajasthan had planned to help about six lakh families in five years (from 1978 to 1982) under this scheme. Of the sanctioned amount, one-third was to be given as pensions, about two-third as loans, and 4 per cent as help (subsidy and loan) through the Khadi Boards. Under this scheme, during 3 years (1978 to 1980), out of about two and a half lakh families identified, 83 per cent were assisted. Of the selected families, 29 per cent were allotted land, 40 per cent were given loans, 22 per cent were given social security benefits, and 9 per cent were provided employment and other benefits (Mehta, 1983:347). The Government of Rajasthan, however, revived the programme in 1981. It selected 1,800 families below the poverty line in every block for benefiting them during a period of three years. Social security benefits and allotment were taken out of the assistance package.

### ***Garibi Hatao and Bekari Hatao Programmes***

The 'Garibi Hatao' slogan was given by Indira Gandhi in March 1971 at the time of the national elections while the *Bekari Hatao* slogan was given by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) at its annual session in April 1988. In fact, the Congress has been talking of 'socialism' since the 1950s. It declared 'socialism' as its main goal in its Avadi session in 1955, Bhubaneshwar session in 1964 and Kamraj Nagar session in April 1988. But the extent to which the Congress has succeeded in achieving this goal is indicated by the fact that more than 10 lakh people in our country live by begging and about half a lakh people survive on donated blood.

### **Panchayati Raj**

The failure of the community development programmes in involving people with the development of the rural communities led to the establishment of Panchayati Raj on the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee. The objects of the Panchayati Raj were democratisation, decentralisation and modernisation. The panchayats were expected to tackle village problems at the grassroots level and mobilise local manpower resources for purposes of economic and social progress. In fact, Panchayati Raj in India has come into existence through a long process of evolution. Its expansion may be analysed in five phases: from 1950 to 1960, from 1961 to 1964, from 1965 to 1985, from 1986 to 1992 and from 1993 to 1999.

A provision was made in the Constitution of India promulgated in January 1950 about organising village panchayats as local self-governing units. The First Five Year Plan also emphasised in 1951-52 promoting people's participation in the management of rural development through local representative institutions. Balwantrai Mehta Committee reviewing the CDPs also recommended in 1956 the establishment of PRIs to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas. The Planning Commission had already forcefully opined that village panchayats should be strengthened and this new democratic set-up should gradually be given the responsibility for taking over development administration. The B.R. Mehta Committee had this plea in view while recommending organisation of three-tiered Panchayati Raj system.

The Panchayati Raj system was initially set up by three states in 1959. After 1959, a network of PRIs went on being built up by most of the state governments. By 1964-65, the PRIs began to function in 12 out of the then 15 states in India. Among the six union territories, only one set up Panchayati Raj. The structure, however, differed in these states. During 1965-85, the Panchayati Raj began to stagnate and even declined in efficacy of its role in the management of development processes. Its credibility began to suffer a setback. Its powers and functions were reduced by the executive orders of the government on grounds of inefficiency, corruption and factionalism in many states. The Janata Party government in 1977 appointed Ashok Mehta Committee to inquire into the causes of decline in the working of Panchayati Raj and suggest measures to strengthen the PRIs. In 1978, this Committee made a number of recommendations for revitalisation of PRIs. These included: assigning more powers to PRIs, making Zilla Parishad primary unit in PR system,

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political parties taking part in Zila PR elections, and imparting training to panchayat members. The Santhanam Committee was appointed to study the problems of resources and finances of PRIs. It recommended measures like: (i) giving powers to panchayats to levy special taxes based on land revenue, house-tax, etc., (ii) sanctioning of grants to panchayats by state governments, (iii) handing over sources of revenue to PRIs, (iv) evolving mutual financial relations between different levels of PRIs, (v) augmenting financial resources through gifts and donations, and (vi) setting up Panchayati Raj Financial Corporation to provide loans and financial assistance to panchayats and help them in providing basic amenities in villages.

Taking the views of these committees, the government decided to amend the Constitution. This amendment was made by the Lok Sabha in December 1992, by the Rajya Sabha in December 1993, and after being ratified by 17 State Assemblies, it came to be known as Constitution Amendment Act, 1993. It came into force from 1994. Today, PRIs are functioning in 22 out of 25 states and in six out of seven union territories. In 15 states, it is a three-tiered system, in four it is 2-tiered and in three, it is one tier system.

The functions assigned to panchayats may be classified as obligatory, discretionary and transferred functions. These functions include: providing civic amenities, infrastructural facilities and developmental activities. Broadly, the functions may be described as: health and sanitation (control of epidemic, construction and maintenance of lavatories, maintenance of burial grounds, cleaning of roads, tanks, ponds and drains), public works (construction and maintenance of roads, drinking water pumps, wells, street lights), agriculture and animal husbandry (distribution of improved seeds and pesticides, planning for increasing agricultural production, arranging cattle fairs, improving cattle breeding, development of poultry and fishing), uplifting the weaker sections (arranging for their education, cultural activities and residential houses), and some miscellaneous works (meeting calamities, encouraging and strengthening cottage industries, strengthening cooperative societies, development of forests, welfare of women and children, adult education programmes).

Since their inception, roles of panchayats have been gradually changed and the scope of their functioning has been enlarged. Even the assumptions have undergone a change. Not only the representatives of the people (i.e., panchayats) have been assigned the responsibility of administering local public affairs but also of raising the required finances and locating man-power resources.

The main problems faced by the panchayats before the 1993 Constitutional Amendment were: (1) Functions and powers given to panchayats were limited. (2) Panchayats were ill-equipped in terms of manpower to undertake planning. (3) Panchayats had no power to generate their own resources through taxation, etc. (4) Elections were not held on regular basis. (5) Women and weaker sections had no representation. Thus, the high hopes with regard to the panchayats were not fulfilled. The main obstacles in the successful functioning of PRIs were described as: non-legalistic status of PRIs, irregular elections, frequent suppressions and suspensions, inadequate representation of weaker sections, insufficient powers given to panchayats, lack of financial resources, non-cooperation on the part of bureaucracy, lack of people's participation and lack of political will. Barnabas (1998: 450) has identified five causes of failure of the Panchayati Raj: confusion about functions, absence of autonomy, confusion in administrative arrangement, absence of coordination and fragmented and overlapping structure.

After this amendment, the main changes introduced in Panchayati Raj were: (1) Establishment of panchayats at three or two levels and a gram sabha in each village was made mandatory. (2) Tenure of PRIs was fixed as five years, i.e., every five years, direct election of all members at three panchayat levels was made mandatory. (3) While election of chairman at the intermediate and district levels was to be indirect, election of the chairman at the village level was left to the state governments to decide. (4) A list of 29 functions was provided to panchayats. These relate to rural development, infrastructure, social welfare, public distribution system, maintenance of community assets, etc. (5) Seats were reserved for SCs, STs, and women at all three levels of panchayats. (6) Finance Commission was set up to devolve funds and suggest ways of financing panchayats. (7)

PRIs were given power to impose taxes, duties and fees and were assigned their share in taxes collected by the state government. The grants-in-aid were also released to them. (8) Election Commission was empowered to conduct panchayat elections. (9) State legislatures have been given discretion to provide for the reservation of OBCs and association of MPs/MLAs in panchayats. (10) While before the amendment, the Sarpanchs of gram panchayats were made members of the Panchayat Samitis and Pradhans of Panchayat Samitis were made members of Zila Parishads, after the amendment, this provision of becoming exofficio members of panchayats at higher level was withdrawn. However, the state governments were given the discretion of associating Sarpanchs with Panchayat Samitis and Pradhans with Zila Parishads.

The positive consequences of these changes after making the Amendment (in 1993) are supposed to be: (1) Structural change regarding direct elections at all three levels will improve the working of the panchayats. Earlier, there were no direct elections to Panchayat Samitis and Zila Parishads. All Sarpanchas constituted members of the Panchayat Samiti and all Pradhans of the Panchayat Samitis became members of the Zila Parishads. The role and the responsibilities of the directly elected members will now widen. (2) Increasing powers of panchayats and financial resources will improve the position of panchayats. (3) Reservation for SCs, STs and women will enable weaker sections to participate more actively in the panchayat system. (4) The new structure will enable panchayats to contribute to planning from below, mobilise local resources, evoke large scale community participation, reduce corruption, and improve the quality of development effort.

The negative effect could be: (i) direct elections may check vertical interaction among panchayats at three levels; and (ii) rotation of reserved seats might reduce the commitment of the representatives to carry on long-term development work.

Hooja and Hooja (1998: 474-75) have pointed out several issues which need to be studied for successful functioning of the panchayats. These are: (1) What should be the level of decentralised planning? (2) Since District Planning Committee would now become very large, what should be the organisational set-up to operationalise decentralised planning and implementation? (3) What functions would be most appropriate at which level in the multi-level framework? (4) What changes would be required at the state government level? (5) What safeguards are necessary and feasible to keep local elite or vested interests from capturing panchayats or from distorting the decentralised planning process? (6) When planning and implementing bodies are the same (i.e., village panchayats and panchayat samitis), how can it be ensured that the planner would not fix targets for himself which are easy to achieve rather than more ambitious ones? (7) How can possible conflicts between different panchayat levels and the state level be avoided?

### *The Progress After the Constitutional Amendment*

How serious are the state government officials in making Panchayati Raj functional? Their non-seriousness is indicated in the following manner: (1) Bureaucrats are unwilling to transfer power to panchayats. (2) They are always reluctant to release funds. (3) Officers do not show any faith in elected representatives. (4) Some states have not yet even conducted elections, though panchayats were supposed to have come into existence within one year after the enforcement of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993. Though Zila Pramukhs are to be Chairmen of the District Rural Development Agencies, (DRDAs) which run all poverty alleviation programmes, yet in practice they will only preside over the meetings of the Governing Councils of the DRDAs; the financial powers would rest with the Collector who would continue to be the chairman of the Executive Committee of the DRDA. Thus, relationship between panchayats and DRDAs needs to be clearly specified. One fails to understand why the elected bodies should not have fully independent charge of development plans and allowed to take initiative so that people at large participate fully in the development process.

It may be concluded that the pragmatic philosophy of miniaturised participative democracy, where every man matters, is the cornerstone of developmental dynamics. The growing consensus is that rural development can be accelerated if people's resources are mobilised and they are prompted to take part in making the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods (*The Third World: Tomorrow*, 36). At present, there is deep factionalism in our villages. Misuse of funds, oppression of the



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powerful, denying opportunities to women, terror against dalits, and subversion of elections are pathologically pervasive in the countryside. To overcome these problems is a tough proposition. No valid reason exists to reject grassroots self-government. Justice Krishna Iyer (*Yojana*, January 23, 1989, 20) assuming that there will be favouritism, casteism, ill-will, bureaucrats' apathy and non-cooperation, even so Panchayati Raj experiments will eventually open the political eyes of the populace. It is fashionable to exaggerate villagers' weaknesses and urbanites' abilities, but our rural geniuses are sure to measure up to the challenge of participative roles.

### **2.3 Urban Communities in India**

With urban growth and urbanisation process in India after 1951, sociologists' interest in urban themes has changed. They not only analyse change in urban organisation but also study stratification and mobility in urban communities and examine new emerging urban problems. The change from 1951 till today (1999) indicates that the rate of urbanisation (movement of population from rural to urban areas and the resultant increasing proportion of population that resides in urban rather than rural areas) is low but the rate of urban growth (percentage increase in absolute size of the urban population) is high. Whereas the percentage of urban population has increased by 1.5 times from 1951 to 1991 (from 17.3 to 25.73%), absolute size of the total population has increased by 2.6 times (from 356.9 million to about 940 million) during the same period. The urban growth has far-reaching implications. Not only rural urban development cannot take place in a balanced manner but also the problems of socio-economic adjustment would accentuate.

#### **Concepts of Urban, Urbanisation and Urbanism**

If the future of India is linked with rural development, it is equally linked with the growth of cities and metropolitan areas. Though increasing urbanisation has led to problems like pollution, overcrowding and slum's, unemployment and poverty, crime and juvenile delinquency, communication and traffic control, violence and sexual harassment of women, tensions and strains, yet cities are centres of civilisation and culture. Before analysing rural-urban interactions, changes in urban social organisation, mobility, integration of ethnic communities, etc., it is necessary to understand the concepts of urban, urbanisation, and urbanism.

The term *urban* is used demographically and sociologically. In the former sense, it lays emphasis on the size of the population, density of population and nature of work of residents, while in the latter sense it focuses on heterogeneity, impersonality, interdependence, and the quality of life. Thus, population of not less than 5,000, density of not less than 1,000 persons per square mile, and 75 per cent or more of working population engaged in non-agricultural activities (like manufacturing, trade and commerce, service, etc.) are said to be important characteristics of town/city or 'urban' (Ramchandran, 1998: 101-103). The 1991 census has defined urban place as any place with a minimum population of 5,000, 75 per cent of the male population being non-agricultural, population density of at least 400 persons per square km (or 1,000 persons per square mile) and with a municipality/corporation/cantonment/notified area. These criteria have, however, been described as vague and conservative on several bases: (1) Though the number of places with more than 5,000 population is defined as 'urban' and there are 12,000 such places in India but the census recognises only 3,245 places as urban. (2) The density of population that qualifies a place as urban is unrealistically low. (3) A place with more than 75 per cent of male working population engaged in non-agricultural activities is to be recognised as urban but according to 1981 and 1991 censuses, at least 25 per cent towns have agriculture as the dominant activity. (4) Female workers are excluded from working population (*Ibid*: 106-107). On this basis, 'urban community' is defined as 'a community characterised by a large heterogeneous population, predominance of nonagricultural occupations, complex division of labour, a high degree of specialisation in work, dependence on formal social controls, and a formalised system of local government'.

Urbanisation is the movement of population from rural to urban areas. Anderson (1953:11) holds that urbanisation involves not only movement of population to cities but also change in the migrants' attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour patterns..



Urbanism is a way of life, characterised by *transiency* (short-time relations), *superficiality* (impersonal and formal relations with limited number of people), *anonymity* (not knowing names and lacking intimacy), and *individualism* (people giving more importance to one's vested interests). Louis Wirth (1938:124) has given four characteristics of *urban system* or urbanism: heterogeneity of population, specialisation of function, anonymity and impersonality, and standardisation of behaviour.

### Rural-Urban Differences: Demographic and Socio-Cultural Characteristics

The term 'community' is used by sociologists to describe a *quality of relationship* which produces a strong sense of shared identity among persons living in a fixed geographical area. They describe 'rural' as a community and 'urban' as a society. When sociologists hold that a society moves from traditional to modern, they in fact contrast pre-industrial, largely rural, traditional society with industrial, largely urban, modern society. While American sociologist Louis Wirth had used the terms 'rural and urban' for contrasting communities, German sociologist Ferdinand Toennies used the terms 'gemeinschaft and gessellschaft', M. Durkheim 'mechanical and organic' solidarity, and Talcott Parsons 'traditional and modern' societies. Wirth (1938) distinguishing urban from rural society, defined city in terms of three fundamental features: population size, density, and heterogeneity. These characteristics meant that though the city-dweller would experience more human contacts than the rural inhabitant, he would also feel more isolated because of their (contacts) 'emotionally empty' nature. According to Wirth, social interactions, typical of city, are impersonal, segmental (narrow in scope), superficial, transitory, and usually of a purely practical or 'instrumental' kind. He describes these as 'secondary' contacts which are totally different from 'primary' contacts in rural areas. According to Max Weber, the most fundamental feature of a city is that it functions as a market-place and it displays a relative pre-dominance of trading-commercial relations.

Rural and urban communities may be distinguished from each other on the basis of several criteria like occupation, size, and density of population, environment, homogeneity-heterogeneity, social stratification, mobility and system of interaction: (1) The main occupation of people in rural community is agriculture though a few people are engaged in non-agricultural pursuits also. People in urban community are mainly engaged in non-agricultural pursuits like manufacturing, trade and commerce, service and professions. (2) Rural communities are of small size while urban communities are of larger size. In India, according to the 1991 census figures, of the 74.27 per cent population living in villages, 36.57 per cent villages have population of less than 2,000, 21.37 per cent between 2,000 and 5,000, and 13.33 per cent more than 5,000. On the other hand, of the 25.73 per cent population in urban areas, 0.72 per cent urban areas have less than 10,000 population, 5.27 per cent between 10,000 and 50,000, 2.75 per cent between 50,000 and one lakh, and 16.4 per cent above 1 lakh (These figures exclude population of Assam and Jammu and Kashmir). (*Manpower Profile, India, 1998: 23-24*). The average size of a household in rural areas in 1991 was 4.9 and in urban areas it was 4.4 members. (3) Density of population in rural community is low (200 to 1,000 persons per square mile) while in urban community, it is high (more than 1,000 persons per square mile). (4) People in rural areas are close to nature while people in urban areas are surrounded more by man-made environment and are isolated from nature. (5) Rural communities are more homogeneous while urban communities are more heterogeneous. (6) While rural communities are stratified more on caste and less on class basis, urban communities are stratified more on class basis. (7) Mobility in rural areas is more from villages to villages and villages to cities, while mobility in urban areas is more from one city to an other city. In 1991, of the 225 million migrants in the country, 17.7 per cent had migrated from rural to urban areas, 11.8 per cent from urban to urban areas, 64.5 per cent from rural to rural areas, and 6 per cent from urban to rural areas (*Manpower Profile, India, 1998: 26*). (8) Relations amongst people in rural areas are predominantly personal and relatively durable while in urban areas, relations are more secondary, impersonal, casual and short-lived. (9) The infant mortality rate in rural areas is one and a half time more than the rate found in urban areas (80: 49) ratio. (10) Labour force participation rate in rural areas is more than three times than that found in urban areas. In 1993-94, it was 294 million in rural areas against 85.7 million in urban areas. Among males, it is little less than three times (189. 3: 67.3

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million ratio). While among females it is more than five times (104.7: 18.4 million) *Manpower Profile, India, 1998: 129*. (11) The number of working children in the rural areas is 10 times more than in the urban areas (In 1991, it was 10.26 to 1.03 million).

### Rural-Urban Interaction

Rural-urban interaction is an important aspect of urbanisation. It is expected that urbanisation and urban growth would have their impact on rural areas and activities in rural areas would have their effect on the nearby towns and cities. A few studies have been made on this rural-urban interaction which have shown that: (1) Urbanisation has impact on the economy of the surrounding villages. There is increase in farm productivity (due to the availability of fertilisers, better seeds, tractors, etc., in nearby cities), increase in commercialisation of crops and decline in the density of farm population. (2) Level and pattern of migration has been affected. (3) Villagers have imbibed several urban characteristics.

Social science literature has often exaggerated contrasts and dichotomies of rural and urban social organisations and ways of life. This type of perspective tends to ignore difference in the size of urban areas ranging anywhere between 5,000 and 15 million. The dichotomous perspective further neglects the existence of continuous interdependent, complimentary and overlapping relationships of rural and urban sectors which are reflected through mutual exchange system of goods and services. The ruralites are dependent on the urbanites for their banking and credit needs, for the purchase of agricultural equipment and other supplies, for marketing of farm products, and even for commercial recreation. The urban sector is dependent on the rural sector for food supply, for cheap labour, and for vast market of its manufactured goods. The urban professionals like doctors, lawyers, etc., draw a large number of their patients/clients from rural masses because hospitals and courts are concentrated in the urban centres (Nagpaul, 1996: 155-156).

Yet other double dimensional phenomenon which affects rural-urban relationships is migration. Most rural migrants who move to urban areas are young males who take up unskilled and semi-skilled occupations.

Even those ruralites who receive higher education prefer to settle in cities. This migration from rural to urban areas exerts pressures on urban public services and creates problems of social disorganisation.

Migration from rural to urban areas is of different types. One is to settle down permanently in the urban area of one's choice. This is called *translocatory* migration. Other is one in which migrants hang on to their rural base and migrate repeatedly and for varying durations, either to the same urban area or to different ones. This is termed *circulatory* migration. Yet others migrate in graded steps from a smaller to a larger settlement. This is known as *step-migration*. Mary Chatterjee (1971) has shown that the stability of migration is a function of distance from the native place, as well as of occupational status. The longer the distance from the native place, the greater the number of migrants who regard their stay in city as temporary. Relatively, more migrants from lower-prestige occupations than those from higher occupations regard their stay in city as temporary.

Migration from rural to urban areas also follows certain patterns. One, it depends upon the 'pull' factors at the urban and 'push' factors at the rural end. Thus, migration of agricultural labourers from Bihar to Punjab during the harvest season is of this type. Then there is migration which is caused by rural poverty and urban opportunity of getting work. Migration of young children as well as of adults from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to other states for the lure of a job is of this 'pull' type.

Along with cooperative relationships and functional dependence, there are cleavages and conflicts also between rural and urban sectors. The conflicts have been classified as primary or secondary, manifest or latent, and episodic or continuous. However, rural-urban conflicts are not clear-cut and do not erupt in open violence. It is difficult to fix their beginning or ending. The three factors identified by (Nagpaul, 1996: 158-160) which promote/foster cleavages and conflicts among the rural people for the urban people are: contrasting environmental subcultures, modernisation, and urban bias.

Lastly, *urban bias* also acts as a source of conflict between rural and urban sectors. Inequalities in income, and better opportunities for occupational mobility and for raising living standards create biases among the villagers for the city people. Though the government has laid emphasis on agricultural development, rural reconstruction and poverty alleviation programmes, in practice, the villagers' lot has not improved much. The rural people also feel strongly about the diversion of rural funds to urban infrastructure of education, health, housing and transport facilities, etc. Some people describe the urban bias as a state of mind, yet the fact is that it creates stresses and conflicts.

Generally, researchers study adjustments which villages have to make due to changes taking place in towns and cities. But Victor S. D'Souza examined how changes taking place in the rural areas produce their impact on the urban centres. He found large-scale transformation in urban functions and increasing trade and commerce predominating most of the towns and cities because of the rural impact.

On the other hand, scholars like B.R. Chauhan (1970) and N.R. Seth (1969) found lack of meaningful and intimate interaction between people in the towns and those of the villages. N.R. Seth has even pointed out social, political and economic differences dividing urban and rural communities in India. Notwithstanding this disjunction, intimate and complementary relationship between the two segments is considered to be normal and desirable state of affairs. A town and a city, by and large, act as service centres for their surrounding village community. L.K. Sen (1971) has shown that like a town and a city, a large village also performs central-place functions for the city as well as surrounding smaller villages.

### Is Indian Society Moving from 'Rural' to 'Urban'

If instead of using the terms rural and urban we use Parsons' terms of traditional and modern societies, it would enable us to use his pattern variables and distinguish between the two societies. The characteristics of traditional society are: *Ascription* (status given by birth), *role diffuseness* (broad relationship), *particularism* (each person treating others in a personal way), *affectivity* (satisfaction of emotions), and *collective orientation* (shared interests). The modern society is characterised by *achievement* (status acquired through one's own efforts), *role specificity* (relationships developed for specific purposes), *universalism* (same rules applying to everybody equally), *affective neutrality* (controlled emotions) and *self-orientation* (individual interest being important). It makes sense to think in terms of a graded rural-urban continuum of which above-mentioned pattern variables are the extremes. In India, these characteristics appear together in various 'mixes' both in rural and urban areas. Since the rural communities have urban characteristics too and urban societies have rural characteristics also, it will be illogical to hold that Indian society is moving from rural to urban.

### Urban Social Organisation: Continuity and Change

The urban social organisation needs to be analysed at two levels: (i) level of change which family, caste, and kinship systems and religious values are undergoing, and (ii) its comparison and contrast with rural social organisation. If we take the second aspect first, it could be said that while rural social organisation is caste-based, urban social organisation is class-based. D'Souza (1985) (*ICSSR Report, 1974, Vol. 1: 161*) too has said urban social organisation is class-based and secular-oriented. However, some other scholars like William L. Rowe (1973), David S. Daykin, and Bradley R. Hertz (1978) hold that caste, kinship, and religion still have their traditional hold over urban communities in India. The change in rural and urban communities on this level is not because of the place of residence but because of the difference in the socio-economic status. S.P. Jain (1971) holds, on the basis of his study in Uttar Pradesh towns, that Hindus and Muslims continue to have traditional caste hierarchy. Sylvia Vatuk (1973) too on the basis of a study of migrants in a North Indian town held that kinship continues to assume importance among the migrants. Mary Chatterjee (1974) and M.F. Khan (1976) have said that kinship is the primary principle of social organisation. The traditional features of social organisation in towns and cities are brought out in a clear focus especially during religious occasions. Milton Singer (1968) has pointed out the prevalence of traditional Indian joint family in urban and industrial settings. Several studies on relationship

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between caste and politics in urban areas have indicated the use of caste by Rajputs, Nadars, Jats, Reddys, Brahmins, Yadavs, etc., for seeking votes. On the other hand, some castes have used politics in cities for social mobility. Thus, there is doubtless continuity in the traditional principles of social organisation, i.e., functioning of caste and kinship systems and the importance of religious values.

However, there is some change also in the functioning of caste and kinship systems in urban areas. In the day-to-day interaction among people in urban areas, neither caste nor kinship nor religious values are given any importance. For economic and social help on different occasions, people depend more on neighbours and acquaintances and office colleagues than on caste and kin.

**Urbanisation and Family**

The effect of urbanisation on family structure has been pointed out by scholars like M.S. Gore, Aileen Ross, K.M. Kapadia, and I.P.Desai. Urbanisation affects not only the family structure but also intra and inter-family relations as well as the functions the family performs. I.P.Desai (1964) in his study of family in a small town in Gujarat found that traditional joint families; (i.e., joint in residence, authority, property and with members of more than three generations) are being replaced by functionally joint families, the size of the family is shrinking; and kinship relationship is confined to two or three generations only. Kapadia (1959) in his comparative study of rural and urban families in Gujarat found that in the rural community, the proportion of joint families is almost the same as that of nuclear families (49.7: 50. 3); in the urban community, there are more joint families than nuclear families, the proportion being two nuclear families for every three joint families. Ross in her study of middle and upper class Hindu families in Bangalore in 1957 found change in structure and size of families as well as weakening or breaking of relations with distant kin. Gore (1968), however, found little change in family due to urbanisation.

**Urbanisation and Caste**

As regards effect of urbanisation on *caste*, scholars like Ramu (1975), Hemlata Acharya (1976), and D.A. Chekki (1974) have pointed out both change as well as continuity in caste and kinship networks. A person in a city derives his status not only from caste but also from other considerations. Broadly speaking, it will not be wrong to say that caste identity tends to diminish with urbanisation. Urbanites participate in networks which include persons of several castes. According to Rajni Kothari, the structure of particularistic loyalties has been overlaid by a more sophisticated system of social and political participation with crosscutting allegiances. Andre Beteille (1966: 209-10) has pointed out that among the westernised elite, class ties are much more important than caste ties.

The educated members of some castes with modern occupations sometimes organise themselves as a pressure group. As such, a caste association competes as a corporate body with other pressure groups for political and economic resources. This type of organisation represents a new kind of solidarity. These competing units function more as social classes than as caste structures.

Yet another change we find today is the fusion of sub-castes and fusion of castes. Kolenda (1984: 150-51) has identified three kinds of fusion: (i) persons of different castes and sub-castes meet in their work-places and in newer neighbourhoods in the city. They are usually of approximately equal rank. Neighbourhood or office group solidarity develops. This has been generally found in government housing colonies in big cities; (ii) intersub caste marriages take place, promoting fusion of subcastes. This is because many a time it is difficult to find a sufficiently educated groom for an educated daughter within one's own sub-caste, but one may find it in neighbouring sub-caste; and (iii) democratic politics fosters fusion of sub-castes and of adjacent castes. For example, the Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (DMK) and the Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazagam (ADMK) parties of Tamil Nadu composed of members of higher non-Brahmin castes.

**Urbanisation and Status of Women**

Status of women in urban areas is higher than that of women in rural areas. Urban women are comparatively more educated and liberal. Against 25.1 per cent literate women in rural areas, there are 54 per cent literate women in urban areas according to the census of 1991. Some of them



are working too. (16.5% urban women belonged to the labour force in 1993-94; *Manpower Profile, India, 1998*: 129) As such, they are not only aware of their economic, social and political rights but they also use these rights to save themselves from being humiliated and exploited. The average age of girls at marriage in cities is also higher than the corresponding age in villages.

However, in the labour market, women are still in a disadvantaged situation. The labour market discriminates against women and is opposed to equality of opportunity – understood in a comprehensive sense to include equality of employment, training and promotional opportunities. In this sense, change is not possible in the sex segregated labour market whose structures ensure that the career patterns of women will normally be marked by discontinuity, unlike the normal male career patterns which assume continuity. Because of the constraints of the sex segregated labour market, women tend to cluster in a limited range of occupations, which have low status and are poorly paid. Women normally prefer teaching, nursing, social work, secretarial and clerical jobs – all of which have low status and low remuneration. Even those women who have surmounted the hurdles to professional education are disadvantaged as they find it difficult to harmonise competing demands of a professional career and home.

Generally speaking, it is difficult for a woman to remain single or to combine marriage with career. Apart from the general expectation that all wives must be housewives, it has been noted that women are called upon to sacrifice their career when the need arises, thereby subordinating their own career to that of their husbands. This often creates frustration among women, leading even to psychotic illness in a few cases. Rural women, however, do not have to face such problems.

It has been further found that in the cities of India, high level education among girls is significantly associated with smaller family size. Though education of women has raised the age of marriage and lowered birth rate, it has not brought about any radical change in the traditional pattern of arranged marriages with dowry. Margaret Cormack (1961: 109) found in her study of 500 university students that girls were ready to go to college and mix with boys but they wanted their parents to arrange their marriage. Women want new opportunities but demand old securities as well. They enjoy their newly found freedom but at the same time wish to carry on with old values.

Divorce and remarriage are new phenomena we find among urban women. Today, women take more initiative to break their marriages legally if they find adjustment after marriage impossible. In Delhi alone, 20 couples file cases every week seeking divorce from their spouses. About 2,000 divorce cases were filed in Delhi courts in five months between January and May, 1999 (*The Hindustan Times*, June 12, 1999). Surprisingly, a large number of divorces are sought by women on the grounds of incompatibility and mental torture.

Politically also, urban women are more active today. The number of women contesting elections has increased at every level. They hold important political positions and also possess independent political ideologies. It may, thus, be concluded that while rural women continue to be dependent on men both economically and socially, urban women are comparatively independent and enjoy greater freedom.

Thus, it may be said that though we may accept the views of scholars like Ashis Nandy (1975) who have talked about new aspects of urban social organisation which have replaced traditional ties, yet we cannot reject the prevalence of traditional aspects in the functioning of family, caste, kinship, and religion in urban settings.

### **Stratification and Social Mobility in Urban Communities**

Indian social stratification is characterised by caste and class. Urbanisation and industrialisation have induced mobility in the stratification system. D'Souza (1978), however, has maintained that the role of industrialisation in bringing change in caste and social mobility has been overemphasised. Urban areas do provide more opportunities for social mobility, but do castes in towns and cities succeed in raising their social status? James Free-man in his study of an urbanised Hindu village in 1974 and Shyamlal in his study of Bhangis near Jodhpur in Rajasthan in 1975 did not perceive mobility in caste system. On the contrary, lower castes in urban areas showed strong inclination to maintain their traditional privileges and obligations. The other view is that in this age, one's



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occupational prestige is by and large dependent upon one's education. The higher the education, the higher the possibility of attaining higher occupational status. Since urban communities offer better educational facilities, the chances of status mobility are higher here. However, Rajendra Pandey (1974) in a comparative study of differences in occupational aspirations of rural and urban college youth concluded that the structural background of the rural and urban societies does make a difference to the aspirations, urges, and values of the youth and accordingly the rural and the urban youth aspire for different kinds of jobs.

The caste system, however, does admit mobility; but it is the group as a whole which changes its position in the caste hierarchy. Scholars like Lynch (1969), Hardgrave (1970) and Ashis Nandy (1978) have pointed out many instances, including those of Jatavs, Nadars and Mahishyas where urbanisation and industrialisation have supported caste mobility. Satish Saberwal (1976) has discussed the process of upward mobility among the Ramgariahs, a carpenter caste of Punjab.

## **Ethnic Diversity and Community Integration**

Since selective type of people migrate to urban areas, urban communities often have some ethnic minorities. This poses the problem of their integration in urban social structures. D'Souza has referred to the studies of two scholars in this context – one by K.S. Nair in Poona in 1978 and other by Andrea Menefee Singh. Both these scholars studied the integration of Brahmin south Indians, following their white-collar occupations, in urban social structures. In both studies, it was found that the migrants had not imbibed the mode of life of the local members, but, on the contrary, they had recreated in the localities of their segregation the conditions of their home communities by establishing south Indian services, institutions and associations. We find the same pattern of integration among Bengalis, Punjabis, Keralites, Tamils, Maharashtrians, Kashmiris, etc. who migrate from their cities of origin to cities in other states. Not only do they create their associations but they meet each other on specific occasions where they continue to follow their traditional social practices. B. Punekar (1974) also found the same process of integration among north Indian migrants in Bangalore city. Punekar, Singh, and Nair analysing the relationships between different ethnic groups living in a city, found mutual indifference and non-interference. In rare cases, they noticed hostility. M.S. Gore (1970) noted hostility in his study of neighbourhood relations in Bombay where the Maharashtrians expressed negative attitude against neighbours who hailed from other regions. However, Maharashtrians are so much affected by the ideology of Shiv Sena Sainiks (Maharashtra for Maharashtrians) that it cannot be said that similar ideology determines relations among different ethnic groups in other parts of the country. The pattern of adjustment of different ethnic groups in cities is one of accommodation and toleration.

## **Urban Neighbourhoods**

Neighbours, as described by sociologists, are the member of a primary group who have close and intimate relationships with one another. But urbanisation has of late affected neighbourhood relations to the extent that the neighbours do not even know each other, not to talk of having social interaction or close relations. Besides M.S. Gore's study on neighbourhood relations mentioned above, Subhash Chandra's study in 1977 examined the level of social participation in neighbourhoods in Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. He found that neighbourhood interaction is marked by a high degree of informality. Harish Doshi in his study of neighbourhoods in Ahmedabad in 1974 found persistence of traditional neighbourhoods as well as some adaptation to the changing circumstances. Niranjana Pant in his study in 1978 found that persons of higher socio-economic status in neighbourhoods are more active in community affairs and in articulating the needs and demands of neighbours.

An analysis of the occupants of the inner city shows that in terms of factors like income, education and occupation, people in the same neighbourhood lead radically different lives. Residents in a neighbourhood can be divided into various groups: immigrants, professionals, students, intellectuals, businessmen, service class, less educated, highly educated and members of middle and rich classes. These varied social classes, though they live in close physical proximity, yet socially they live in different 'worlds'. A member of an upper class may live at a stone's throw from a person belonging to a poor or a lower middle-class community but is sealed off from its

occupants by wealth, privileges and power. We find similar social differences among people of different classes who come to live in newly developed colonies in big cities. Their residences may not be secluded but socially they live distinct lives. The rich people living there do not consider themselves to be 'part of the local community'. Members of upper class know each other but others only know of them. Sometime, middle class people buy property in previously working class areas in the city. This process is referred to as 'gentrification'. It affects the quality of the social patterns of residents.

### **Problems of Urban Society**

Urban problems are endless. To name the more important among them are: pollution, corruption, unemployment, crime and juvenile delinquency, overcrowding and slums, drug addiction and alcoholism, and begging. We analyse here some of the more crucial problems.

#### ***Housing and Slums***

Housing people in a city or abolishing 'houselessness' is a serious problem. Government, industrialists, capitalists, entrepreneurs, contractors, and landlords have been unable to keep pace with the housing needs of the poor and the middle class people. According to the 1988 UNI report (*The Hindustan Times*, 9 May, 1988), between one-fourth and half of the urban population in India's largest cities lives in makeshift shelters and slums. Millions of people are required to pay excessive rent, that is, one which is beyond their means. In our profit-oriented economy, private landlords and colonizers find little profit in building houses in cities for the poor and the lower middle-class people; rather they consider it gainful to concentrate instead on meeting the housing needs of the rich and the upper-middle class. The result has been higher rents and a scramble for the few available houses. Almost half of the population are either ill-housed or pay more than 20 per cent of their income on rent. In some states, Housing Boards and City Development Authorities have tried to remedy the city housing problem with active financial support from the Life Insurance Corporation, HUDCO and such other agencies. They even charge the total housing cost in monthly instalments on interest varying between 9 per cent and 11 per cent. Thus, housing in cities even today continues to be a gigantic problem next only to food and clothing. The estimated shortage of houses at the beginning of the Eighth Plan was about 30 million units, out of which about 8 million were required for urban areas. By 1998, the shortage was expected to grow to 13 million units in urban areas. In Delhi alone, which has seen a population increase from 6.2 to 9.3 million between 1981 and 1991, there is an addition of 60,000 people each year who need to be provided with new housing. Almost 70 per cent of Delhi's population, according to a UNI report, lives in sub-standard conditions. With the country's slum population of 1991 standing at nearly 40 million, slum dwellers form 44 per cent of population in Delhi, 45 per cent in Mumbai, 42 per cent in Calcutta, and 39 per cent in Chennai. The situation is no better in eight other metropolises of Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Pune, Nagpur, Lucknow and Jaipur. Slum population, governmental efforts notwithstanding, is expected to show a sizable increase by 2010 aggravating the housing existing problem and squalor conditions. Living conditions in slum areas are characterised by overcrowding, poor environmental conditions, scarcity of health and family welfare services, and total absence of minimum level of residential accommodation. As a result, conditions of people living in slums is far more pathetic than in rural areas.

#### ***Crowding and Depersonalisation***

Crowding (density of population) and people's apathy to other persons' problems (including their neighbours' problems) is another problem growing out of city life. Some homes are so overcrowded that five to six persons live in one room. Some city neighbourhoods are extremely over-crowded. Overcrowding has very deleterious effects. It encourages deviant behaviour, spreads diseases, and creates conditions for mental illness, alcoholism, and riots. One effect of dense urban living is people's apathy and indifference. City-dwellers do not want to 'get involved' in other people's affairs. Some people do take interest in accidents and in cases of molestations, assaults and even murders but most people choose to be mere onlookers.

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**Water Supply and Drainage**

We have reached a stage where no city has round the clock water supply. Intermittent supply results in a vacuum being created in empty water lines which often suck in pollutants through leaking joints. Cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Rajkot, Ajmer, and Udaipur get water from municipal sources for less than an hour a day. Many small towns have little water rain supply and are dependent on tubewells. Even a relatively planned and serviced city like Delhi has now to reach as far as 180 km to the Ramganga for augmentation of water supply. Bangalore pumps water from far off distance with a lift of about 700 metres. Most towns and cities which normally get good rain every year, have been undergoing the agony of acute water shortage in the last eight-nine years. What seems to be sadly lacking is a national water policy which would assess the total water resources and then allocate water. This in spite of the State Chief Ministers' meeting at Delhi in September 1987 which approved National Water Policy which aimed at giving priority to drinking water requirements.

When we look on the other side of the water problem, that is, drainage, we find the situation equally bad. One of the less known facts about India is that there is not a single city which is fully sewerred. Not even Chandigarh can claim this distinction because unauthorised constructions in and around it lie outside the purview of the main system. Because of the non-existence of the drainage system, large pools of stagnant water can be seen in every city even in summer months. Just as we need a national water policy, we also need a national and regional drainage policy.

**Transportation and Traffic**

The transportation and traffic picture in all Indian cities is extremely unsatisfactory. A majority of people use buses and tempos, while a few use rail as transit system. The increasing number of scooters, motorcycles, mopeds and cars make traffic problem worse. For example, in Mumbai, automobiles have trebled (from 3.1 lakh to 8.73 lakh) between 1986 and 1996 (*The Hindustan Times*, November 29, 1996). They pollute the air with smoke. In Mumbai alone, daily pollutants let out into the air are about 3,000 tons, of which 52 per cent come from automobiles, 2 per cent from domestic fuels, and the remaining 46 per cent from industries.

The number of buses plying in metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Calcutta is not adequate and commuters have to spend about one to two hours to get into a bus, which means leaving home two hours in advance in the morning to reach their place of work and reaching home two hours late in the evening. The main reason for this messy condition is that the low income of commuters forces them to live in areas with cheap accommodation which necessitates extensive travel. Further, since city residents cannot afford to pay high fares for using public transport system, fares have to be kept very low which results in all city bus services sustaining such annual losses as hamper their expansion or maintenance of a fleet adequate to meet city needs.

**Power Shortage**

Closely linked with transportation is the question of power shortage. The use of electrical gadgets has considerably increased in cities; on the other hand, the establishment of new industries and the expansion of the old ones has also increased dependence on electricity. Most states are not in a position to generate the power that they need with the result that they remain dependent on the neighbouring states. Conflict over distribution and supply of power among states often leads to severe power crises in cities.

**Sanitation**

Municipalities and municipal corporations in Indian cities are so riddled with maladministration that they have time for sanitation of their cities, particularly with regard to removing garbage, cleaning drains, and unclogging sewers. Sweepers rarely and reluctantly perform their assigned duties and every few months threaten to go on strike on the issue of wages, etc. Garbage disposal fleets operate to a third or half of their capacity. If removing garbage work is assigned to private contractors, they always complain of non-payment of money and stop working on slight pretexts. There is, thus, total lack of motivation to tackle the basic sanitation needs of the cities. The spread

of unauthorised slums in congested urban areas and lack of civic sense among the settlers in these slums further adds to the growing mound of filth and diseases. Various forms of racketeering in municipal work exist in our cities. For instance: (a) since payment for garbage removal is made on the basis of trips and not the weight of the garbage picked up, a large number of trips are shown on records and money is split between the contractor and the municipal employees; (b) a large number of vehicles used for garbage-collecting operations are actually used for unauthorised work; (c) debris is diverted and sold to private parties for filling up building sites while payment for debris disposal is taken from the municipality; and (d) drivers of trucks and dumpers sell diesel meant for sanitation trucks.

Obviously, the basic problem is excessive urbanisation and the resultant slumming of cities. Since our politicians use migrants as vote-banks, they remain unconcerned with taking necessary civic action. Lack of understanding at the planning level, lack of coordination between the agencies concerned, mismanagement of municipalities, and lack of necessary funds to be provided by state governments will always remain barriers to putting sanitation maintenance cycle in proper shape. If cities continue to treat sanitation and sewage as low-priority areas, overcoming health crisis in urban areas will be an insurmountable task in years to come. As a long-term remedy, what is needed is using new techniques of refuse collection, new technology for the disposal of garbage, and a fundamental change in the municipal infrastructure and land use planning.

### **Pollution**

Our cities and towns are major polluters of the environment. Several cities discharge 40 per cent to 60 per cent of their entire sewage and industrial effluents untreated into the nearby rivers. The smallest town contributes its share of garbage and excreta to the nearest waterway through its open drains. Urban industry pollutes the atmosphere with smoke and toxic gases from its chimneys. Areas recording higher levels of air pollution abound with many ailments which particularly affect children below five years and people above fifty years of age. The high synergistic effect of sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, etc. causes many diseases. The ambient air quality in Delhi gives it the dubious distinction of being the fourth most polluted city in the world. The issue of environmental pollution in urban areas is considered so significant that even the Supreme Court in July 1995 had to ask for strict enforcement of environmental laws leading to closure or relocation of about 146 hazardous industries in Delhi by November-December 1996. The orders led to even agitations by the affected workers in December 1996, but the Apex Court stuck to its decision of not allowing industries within the National Capital Region (NCR), and shifting them to neighbouring states. The vehicular emissions in Delhi account for 64 per cent of Delhi's air pollutant load, power plants are responsible for 16 per cent and industries account for 12 per cent.

Similar significant role was played by the Supreme Court in yet another judgement on environment protection in Andhra Pradesh in October 1996. The judgement banned shrimp (small marine fish) culture within 500 metres of the high tide line along the 6,000 km coastline and the dismantling of all structures within the restricted zone by March 1997. The country earns more than Rs.600 crore in foreign exchange through export of shrimp from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu alone. According to an estimate by the Central Pollution Control Board, the effluent generation from aquaculture farms on the east coast alone was about 2.37 million cubic metres (*The Hindustan Times*, January 6, 1997). The poison we put in the environment comes right back to us through our air, water and food, slowly seeping into our bodies and showing up as cancer, immune disorders or as hormonal system disorders. No wonder, the doctors claim that the worsening environmental condition in India has increased the chances of catching cancer dramatically in the four metros—Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai—the chances of having cancer are as high as 7 to 11 per cent during a lifetime. A conservative estimate of cancer patients in India by the year 2001 stands at eight lakhs. Of course, the poor suffer more than the rich from environmental degradation.

### **Causes of Urban Problems**

Following McVeigh and Shostak (1978: 198-205) who have linked urban problems in the United States to four factors, we can identify following five major causes of problems of urban life in India:

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**Migration**

As already indicated, people migrate to towns/cities because of the relatively better employment opportunities available there. In India, rural to urban and urban to rural migration is crucial. The 1991 census figures pointed out that in 17.7 per cent cases, migration was from rural to urban, and in 11.8 per cent cases it was from urban to urban (*Manpower Profile India*, 1998: 26). The analysis of intra-district migration (short distance migration), inter-district or intra-state migration (medium distance migration) and inter-state migration (long distance migration) shows that about 68 per cent migrations are short distance, 21 per cent are medium distance and 11 per cent are long distance migrations (Bose, 1979: 187).

Entry of the rural poor into a city depletes sources of revenue. On the other hand, the rich people today prefer to live in suburban areas. This movement of the rich causes financial loss to the city. This migration to the city and away from the city aggravates problems.

**Industrial Growth**

While the urban population growth is 4 per cent in India, the industrial growth rate is about 6 per cent per annum. The ninth Five Year Plan postulated an industrial growth rate of 8 per cent per annum. This growth was expected to take care of additional job requirements in the cities. The tertiary sector also provides refuge to migrants, though their earnings remain at low level.

**A pathy of the Government**

The administrative mismanagement of our cities is also responsible for the mess in which city-dwellers find themselves. Municipal authorities have not kept pace with city growth, either spatially or in terms of management infrastructure. There is neither the will nor the capacity to plan for the future. There is also no skill and capability to manage what exists. Until we improve the capacity of our cities to govern themselves, we cannot emerge from the urban mess. On the other hand, state governments also put many restrictions on local governments in raising necessary funds for dealing with particular urban problems.

**Defective Town Planning**

A more alarming factor in the general deterioration in the standard of civic services is the growing sense of helplessness of our planners and administrators.. From the Planning Commission downwards, there seems to be a fatalistic acceptance of uncontrolled growth of our metropolitan cities. In fact, a member of the National Commission on Urbanisation had expressed a feeling that very little is being done in our country to plan the growth of the cities in a proper way.

**Vested-interest Forces**

The last cause of urban problems is the vested interest forces that work against people but enhance private commercial interests and profits. The city residents are usually powerless to affect decisions that the elite make to further their own interests, power and profit. When these powerful elite can make more money, they adopt plans and programmes no matter how many people are hurt in the process. The best example of the role of the vested interests was the transfer of one Municipal Commissioner in Maharashtra for 25 times in 25 years who refused to toe the line of politicians, bureaucrats and petty officials for their motivated interests and got demolished many unauthorised constructions.

**Solutions to Urban Problems**

Some measures have to be adopted if we want to remedy urban problems. The measures suggested are as follows:

**Systematic Development of Urban Centres and Creation of Job Opportunities**

One important solution to our urban problems is the systematic development of the fast growing urban centres and planning an investment programme, which over the next 20 years or so, could give rise to a large number of well distributed, viable urban centres throughout the country. So far we have been focusing attention on programmes for providing wage employment in rural areas



through IRDP, NREP and JRY to hold people back in villages. While there is ample justification for providing rural employment, this by itself is not enough. It is not possible to provide gainful employment in the agricultural sector beyond a certain point. For this purpose, we have to lay emphasis on programmes which can permit multifunctional activities to sustain people in cities.

#### Regional Planning along with City Planning

Urban planning is almost city-centred. We have always been talking of town and city planning but never of the planned development of the whole region so that population is logically dispersed and activities are properly distributed. City planning is an ad hoc solution but regional planning could be a more lasting one. For example, instead of providing houses to slum-dwellers in cities through city development authorities, if through regional planning migrants could be diverted to other areas which may provide attractive employment, the pace of growth of existing cities could be checked. It is to be appreciated that at least beginning from the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997), the Government of India has started helping states in setting up regional planning organisations and evolving meaningful regional settlement plans.

#### *Encouraging Industries to Move to Backward Areas*

Land pricing policy which gives land in large chunks at throwaway prices has to be replanned to encourage industries to move to backward areas/districts. This will also take care of linear development of metropolitan and big cities. A policy of the state taking over potential high value land in and around large cities with a view to exploiting its full cost at a later date also needs serious consideration.

#### *Municipalities to Find Own Financial Resources*

People do not mind paying taxes to the municipality if their money is properly utilised to maintain roads, provide sewage system, reduce water shortage and provide electricity. It is a well known fact that cities suffer from crippling resource constraints. If deterrent punishment is given to the corrupt municipality officials, there is no reason why the municipal corporations should find it difficult collecting money from the residents of a city. A city must bear the cost of its own development. High financial support from state government is becoming difficult. By revising property, water and electricity taxes, money can be collected and more money per head per annum can be made available for providing necessary amenities. When any new industry or business is located in a city or on its periphery, it could be moderately taxed so that additional money becomes available to the local body.

#### *Encouraging Private Transport*

Why should city transport be a public monopoly? When transport is handled by state employees, it has been noticed that they tend to behave extremely rudely and callously. Backing of the trade unions encourages them to go on strikes frequently. It is necessary then that private transportation be encouraged. Privately operated mini bus and tempo services will charge a little more fare and commuters would not mind paying this in view of better services.

#### *Adopting Pragmatic Housing Policy*

In May 1988, the central government presented National Housing Policy (NHP) to the parliament which aimed at abolishing 'homelessness' by the turn of the century and upgrading the quality of accommodation to a fixed minimum standard. Such policy sounds too ambitious and utopian. It is a dream impossible to accomplish in a span of remaining one year or so by which time the twentieth century will have ended. The government policy and planning has to be more down to earth. This is not to say that the concept of NHP is irrational. The NHP strategy is broadbased. It seeks to provide easy access to finance as well as land and materials for building houses at reasonable rates. It also seeks to encourage manufacturers to use new type of building materials. Moreover, it seeks to review the entire gamut of laws relating to land tenure, land acquisition and ceiling to apartment ownership, municipal regulations and rental laws. But these are all thorny

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issues. The NHP is oriented towards rich developers, land-lords and contractors. The NHP has to discourage luxury housing and promote cooperative and group housing societies. It has to develop special schemes for the poor and low-income people. It has also to provide incentives to employers to build houses for the employees.. It has to increase its authorised capital of Rs. 100 crore which cannot go anywhere near meeting its financial needs. Unless a more pragmatic NHP is adopted, it will be impossible to achieve the set goals.

***Structural Decentralisation***

One proposal by innovative planners and some radicals envisions a structural decentralisation of local self-government itself. This could entail the creation of 'neighbourhood-action groups', to be called 'community centres' consisting of representatives of residents and municipality officials.

These centres will identify and act upon neighbourhood needs. For example, many new colonies have come to be established in many cities in which as many as 10,000 to 50,000 people reside. Thus, these colonies are small towns by themselves. Some taxes like house tax, road tax, light tax, etc., could be passed on directly to these community-centres instead of giving them to municipalities. The centres would direct the affairs of the neighbourhood without reference to the city municipal corporation and use the collected money for maintaining roads, lights and so forth. The argument for this kind of decentralised structure within the city is that the same system that allows lakhs of people a substantial control over their civic destiny denies them an effective role in shaping the institutions that shape their lives. Community centres will allow them to create their own exclusive environment.

To conclude, it may be pointed out that the effects of urbanisation and urbanism and the problems of cities can never be solved until urban planning is modified and radical measures are taken. These should not be based on profit motive which would benefit a few vested interests. The use of land, technology, and taxes should be for the benefit of the people and not for the benefit of a few powerful interests. City dwellers have to become active and organise themselves and agitate to change the existing economic and social systems in the cities.

**De-Urbanisation of Cities and Urbanisation of Villages**

If we analyse city not as a physical entity but as a focal point of activity of groups of people, the most powerful of whom are businessmen, politicians and civil servants, we find that sometimes these groups act in concert and sometimes in conflict but their major decisions affect the lives of the rest of the people. Further, in cities (as in Ludhiana, Calcutta, Mumbai, Indore, Bhilwara, etc.) the area around the business centre is inhabited by low income groups and beset by social problems. In addition, advanced technology and large scale industry make craft industries and other small-scale production units obsolete and uncompetitive. Much new economic development, notably in the service sector occurs outside the old, inner urban industrial areas. People, therefore, migrate to other areas. Those who remain in the inner city are drawn disproportionately from the old, socially disadvantaged, unskilled and semi-skilled workers. They are joined by immigrants who are prepared to do unskilled and semi-skilled work in the inner city. This process of economic decline of urban areas and of population movement out of them are referred to collectively as 'de-urbanisation'. On the other hand, 'urbanisation' of many suburban rural areas also occurs. Of course, not all urban areas decline. It is mainly the 'old' industrial cities that experience de-urbanisation. Many industrial towns undergo a parallel increase in population. Nor is the process of de-urbanisation irreversible.

In Delhi, when the High Court ordered the shifting of heavy industries from Delhi to other areas for preventing pollution, thousands of persons working in these industries had to leave Delhi and settle near the new place of industry. Many government offices were also shifted from Delhi to Ghaziabad and nearby Gurgaon town which also compelled the affected people to leave Delhi. The suburban areas where these industries and offices are opened gradually become urbanised. Thus, de-urbanisation process affects the urbanites and the urbanisation process affects the villagers.

**On Rural-Urban Fringe****Notes**

One change witnessed after independence is the occurrence of rural-urban fringe around cities. The cities have penetrated into rural areas to a distance of 14-15 km. Much of this development has occurred in unplanned, haphazard and spontaneous manner. As one moves out of the city, one observes new residential colonies, a few factories, commercial squatters on either side of the road, cold storage plants, warehouses, timber yards, etc. These features symbolise the physical expansion of the city. The term rural-urban fringe has been used to designate such areas. The fringe area is, thus, defined as "an area of mixed urban and rural landusers between the point where city services cease to be available and the point where agricultural landuses predominate".

These areas not only affect the social life of the people living there but they have also generated jobs for the rural population. Even those who continue with farming, get an expanding market for vegetables, fruits, milk, etc. This affects the traditional attitudes and values as well as the lifestyle of ordinary rural people.

Structurally, rural-urban fringe comprises urban fringe plus rural fringe. The former consists of municipal or non-municipal town and urbanised villages contiguous to town/city. The latter consists of municipal or non-municipal town, partially urbanised villages away from the main city and wholly rural villages. Thus, urban-rural fringe includes urban corridors and suburbs but not satellites and green belts. The 'corridor' sometimes extends to a distance of over 30 km from the city centres while the 'suburb' implies a location near the periphery of a city. Most suburbs are purely residential in character. People in the suburbs identify them-selves with the city and claim to be living within the city. The difference between the suburb and satellite is merely one of distance from the city centre. Suburbs are closer to the city while satellites are located farther away.

The villages in the fringe area undergo a process of change in three ways: (a) changes in land uses within the village, (b) occupation changes, (c) changes in the social and economic life styles of the people of the village.

It may be concluded that cities in India are now developing unevenly. Pollution, inequality, absence of transport facilities to cover distance from home to work-place and back – all these and other similar factors require that policies of settlement and providing amenities in different areas in the city should not be left only to state governments and local bodies but the local residents must also be effectively and beneficially involved in any revitalisation of their localities. Louis Wirth's model of rural-urban, and the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft framework of Toennies, now seem inadequate as conceptual frameworks to deal with contemporary urban issues. Unemployment, poverty, caste and communal conflicts, public disorder and pollution, have increased the urgency of the debate on urban policy.

**Self-Assessment****1. Choose the correct option:**

- (i) The Garibi Hatao slogan was given by ..... in 1971.  
 (a) Jawarhar Lal Nehru (b) Rajiv Gandhi  
 (c) Indira Gandhi (d) None of these
- (ii) The IRDP was launched all over the country in .....  
 (a) 1982 (b) 1885 (c) 1990 (d) 2000
- (iii) Jawahar Razgar Yojna was announced in April .....  
 (a) 1988 (b) 1989 (c) 1990 (d) 1991
- (iv) The Panchyati Raj System was initially set-up by three states in .....  
 (a) 1959 (b) 1958 (c) 1950 (d) 1954
- (v) The Tribal Population in India according to the 1991 census, was .....  
 (a) 67.76 million (b) 6.6 million (c) 7.3 million (d) 56.5 million

## 2.4 Summary

- The tribes in India are spread over the length and breadth of the country. They vary in strength in different states from a few hundreds to several lakhs. The highest number of tribals according to the 1991 census are found in Madhya Pradesh (15.4 million), followed by Maharashtra (7.3 million), Orissa (7 million), Bihar (6.6 million) and Gujarat (6.1 million).
- Tribes are relatively isolated from larger cultural influences, have a relative cultural homogeneity and a simple technology. They believe in spirits, magic and witchcraft. They have their own taboos which prohibit 'certain' actions that are punishable by the community, by the supernatural, or by magical consequences.
- "A community occupying a common geographic area and having a similar language and culture or beliefs and practices".
- The basic characteristics of animism are: the beliefs that all animate and inanimate objects are permanently or temporarily inhabited by spirits; all activities are caused by these spirits; spirits have power over the lives of men; men can be possessed by spirits; and they can be influenced by magic.
- Using *language* as a criterion for difference between a tribe and a caste, it is said that each tribe has its own language but not a caste. But then there are tribes which do not have their own languages but speak the dialect of one of the main Indian languages, as in South India. Therefore, language also cannot be accepted as a criterion for distinction.
- Tribal government programmes have not significantly helped the tribals in raising their economic status. The British policy had led to ruthless exploitation of the tribals in various ways as it favoured the *zamindars*, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors, and excise, revenue and police officials.
- About 90 per cent of the tribals are engaged in cultivation and most of them are landless and practise shifting cultivation. They need to be helped in adopting new methods of cultivation.
- The tribals are exploited by Christian missionaries. In several tribal areas, mass conversion to Christianity had taken place during the British period. While the missionaries have been pioneers in education and opened hospitals in tribal areas, they have also been responsible for alienating the tribals from their culture. Christian missionaries are said to have many a time instigated the tribals to revolt against the Indian government.
- Two instances of tribal exploitation are highlighted here to explain the cause of their movements. At the time of independence, there existed a government order in Andhra Pradesh according to which all land transactions had to be in favour of the tribals.
- They burned tribal huntments, criminally assaulted women, wounded and killed the tribals and forced them to do bonded labour for them. In another incident, 21 non-tribals who were allegedly stealing firewood from a forest were caught by the tribals and taken to their village and kept imprisoned till the police rescued them.
- There is no serious widow problem in tribal societies. A widow is free to remarry. There are some tribes where a widow marries her deceased husband's younger brother (levirate marriage). The bride-price custom has not elevated the status of women. It rather degrades them to be treated in the manner of articles of property and a commodity to be bought and sold. Divorce is permitted in many tribal societies. The procedure of divorce is also simple as it consists of mutual consent, a formal ceremony, and paying back of the bride-price.
  1. The community is hierarchically divided in four segments on the basis of ritual superiority which resembles Hindu *varna* framework.
  2. In some parts of India, the tribals have adopted some traits of Christianity also. Nagas, Mizo, Santhals, Oraon, Munda, Kharia, etc., are some tribes in North East and North West India on which we find marked imprint of Christianity. The evidence is provided by micro-level studies of tribals made by Dutta Majumdar (1956), Sahay (1976), Sachchidananda (1964) and Bose (1967).

- Tribals are also being integrated in the political system of the country. The introduction of the Panchayati Raj has offered them opportunity for an increased involvement in the political activities. By contesting elections, they have started acquiring power at Panchayat Samiti and state levels. This has also resulted in educational and social development of tribals.
- About 74 per cent of India's population lives in villages. The incidence of poverty is much higher in villages—roughly 39 per cent of the rural population are poor. Agriculture is a source of livelihood for 70 per cent of the population but agriculture accounts for less than 40 per cent of the national income.
- According to the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) definition, approved by the Ministry of Rural Development, as revised in May 1991, a rural household with an annual income of less than Rs. 11,000 is described as a poor household.
- Poverty can also be measured by the persons' access to piped water, electricity, *kutcha* or *pucca* houses, and the public distribution system. A staggering 55 per cent of the rural population of the country still live in '*kutcha* houses. Further, in most backward states (like West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), 15 to 19 per cent rural homes have electricity, 9 to 11 per cent have piped water and 11 to 16 per cent have access to public distribution system.
- When the Constitution of India was framed, Article 23 was enshrined in it which prohibited 'traffic in human beings', '*begar*' and other similar forms of forced labour.
- It is estimated that there are about 32 lakh bonded labourers in India. Of these, 98 per cent are said to be bonded due to indebtedness and 2 per cent due to customary social obligations. The highest number is believed to exist in three states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, followed by Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- Rehabilitation is both physical and psychological. Physical rehabilitation is essentially economic whereas psychological rehabilitation has to be built up through a process of assurance and reassurance. The two must go side by side. The first prerequisite of psychological rehabilitation is that the freed bonded labourers must be wrenched away from the old habitat and be rehabilitated at a place where they will no longer be subject to the ruinous influence of the erstwhile bonded labour-keepers.
- The Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) aimed at providing supplemental employment to the poor on public works at a very low wage of Rs. 3 per day. Maharashtra was one state which had used the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) for the unemployed in rural areas by levying EGS surcharge or collections on land revenue, sales tax, motor vehicles, irrigated holdings, and on professionals.
- The evaluation of the community development projects (CDPs) was done by scholars like A.R. Desai, S.C. Dube, Oscar Lewis, Mandelbaum, Opler, Carl Taylor, Wilson, and many others.
- Since the rural communities have urban characteristics too and urban societies have rural characteristics also, it will be illogical to hold that Indian society is moving from rural to urban.
- The educated members of some castes with modern occupations sometimes organise themselves as a pressure group. As such, a caste association competes as a corporate body with other pressure groups for political and economic resources. This type of organisation represents a new kind of solidarity. These competing units function more as social classes than as caste structures.
- Status of women in urban areas is higher than that of women in rural areas. Urban women are comparatively more educated and liberal. Against 25.1 per cent literate women in rural areas, there are 54 per cent literate women in urban areas according to the census of 1991.



Notes

### 2.5 Key-Words

1. Tribal : Members of tribal communities, especially in the Indian subcontinent.
2. Endogamy : It is the practice of marrying within a specific ethnic group, class, or social group, rejecting others on such basis as being unsuitable for marriage or other close personal relationships.

### 2.6 Review Questions

1. What are the problems of urban society? Explain.
2. Discuss the tribal life in India.
3. Write a note on the village communities in India.
4. Briefly examine the urban communities in India.
5. Explain the social consequences of land reforms.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) (c)                      (ii) (a)                      (iii) (b)                      (iv) (a)                      (v) (a)

### 2.7 Further Readings



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 3: Marriage

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- Objectives
- Introduction
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- 3.2 Forms of Marriage
- 3.3 Marriage among Muslims
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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of Marriage.
- Discuss the forms of Marriage.
- Know the marriage among Muslims.
- Explain the Christian Marriage.

### Introduction

Different sciences have different frames of reference in studying any institution. Marriage is also conceived differently by social scientists in different fields. While the popular concept of marriage is that it is a union between a man and a woman, anthropologists like Lowie, Murdock and Westermarck emphasize on social sanction in the union and how it is accomplished by different rituals and ceremonies. Sociologists like Blood, Lantz and Snyder, Bowman, Baber, Burgess, etc., view it as a system of roles and as involving primary relationships. Indologists look upon Hindu marriage as a *sanskara* or a *dharma*. Before studying the traditional and modern systems of Hindu marriage, we will try to understand the concept and the sociological significance of marriage.

### 3.1 Concept of Marriage

Every individual has to play a number of roles in his life, or we may say, life consists of a combination of roles played in various institutional settings. Of the various roles one plays, two roles have a very great significance: one is the economic role and the other is the marital or the family role. The former is unquestionably prominent in life because one devotes quite a good part of his career in performing it. Assuming that one starts earning one's livelihood at the age of twenty to twenty-four years and continues to do so up to the age of fifty-eight to sixty-two years, that is, the economic career is spread over to about four decades and that every day one devotes eight to ten hours to his job/work, one can well assume the period which one's economic role consumes. The marital role also involves about forty to fifty years of one's life. But, of these two roles, the marital role is more important than the economic role because when the latter involves secondary relations, the former involves personal or primary relations.

Primary relations are essentially unlimited, particularistic, emotionally involved, altruistic and spontaneous. Conversely, secondary relations are typically limited, standardized, unemotional, utilitarian and contractual. Again, primary relationship in marriage is different from the primary

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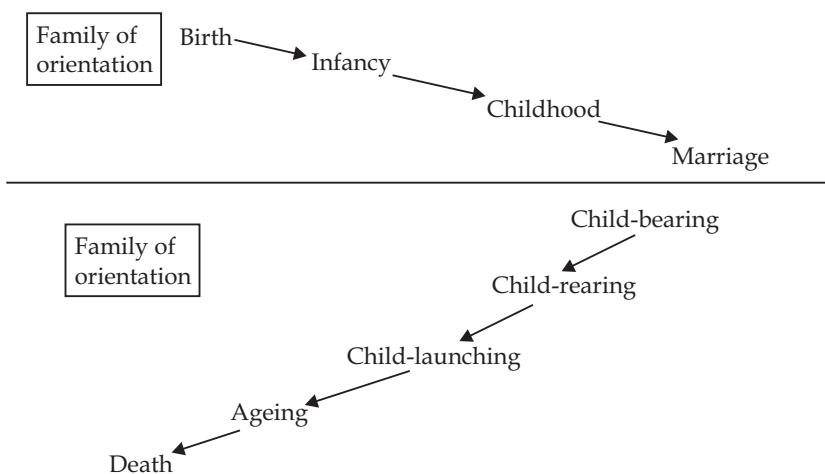
relationship in other primary groups like friends' group, neighbourhood, village, etc., in the sense that primary relationship in the former is based on sexual relationship also, and this sexual relationship brings further intimacy and permanence in the relationship between a man and a woman. Primary relation in marriage performs two important functions: one of need gratification and other of social control. It gratifies biological (sex satisfaction), psychological (affection and sympathy) and economic (food, clothing and shelter) needs of the individuals and also acts as a primary source of morality and ethics. When one finds one's partner performing certain tasks for him/her, he/she considers it his/her moral obligation to care for her/him or to listen to her/him. One is, thus, no longer free to be immoral and irresponsible.

A sociologist, while studying marriage, analyzes not only the primary relationships involved in it but also how marriage involves performing new and varied roles and whether the persons involved are capable of performing those new roles or not, and how the inadequacy of performing these roles leads to family disorganization. What is important in marriage is how the role enactment of one partner corresponds to the role expectations of the other.

According to Koos (1953: 44), marriage is a dividing line between the family of orientation and family of procreation in terms of the nature of roles one performs in the two families. The roles in the family of orientation vary in infancy, childhood and adolescence and carry no responsibilities and obligations, but the roles one performs in the family of procreation after the marriage as a husband, a father, a wage-earner, a grandfather, a retired person, etc., have different expectations and obligations.

Thus, marriage is a miniature social system which must be kept in equilibrium if it is not to fall apart. Equilibrium requires adjustment which in turn requires give and take or some sacrifice on the part of both husband and wife. It is a dyad system. To maintain equilibrium requires certain tasks to be performed by someone; for example, of cooking, cleaning, washing, wage-earning, child-care and so on. Who performs which role is immaterial (though society has certain expectations from both husband and wife). What is significant is that somebody should perform these roles for the stability of marriage.

*Diagram showing different stages in families of orientation and procreation involving different roles*



Marriage also involves 'instrumental' and 'integrative' leadership roles. The 'instrumental' leader is concerned with getting things done and pushing the group to its goals. The 'integrative' leader is concerned with holding the group together despite the strains created by the instrumental leader. Thus, though the two roles are contradictory, yet they are complementary. It is all these roles that are studied by the sociologists in the institution of marriage.

### 3.1.1 Motivations in Marriage

All roles have certain motivations. What is the motivation in marriage? It is maintained that in the early periods, an individual married because of the practical problems related to getting a living. These practical problems were that people wanted children for economic reasons. They wanted them as an insurance against wants when they (parents) could no longer work for themselves. They also wanted more women to work on fields. This does not mean that there was no love or companionship in early marriage. Only practical reasons were more important.

According to Bowman (1960), the basic objects of marriage are: sex gratification, desire for home and children, companionship, social position and prestige, and economic security and protection. Popenoe (1951) has talked of five elements of marriage: mating urge, division of labour, desire for home and children, comradeship (sexually as well as non-sexually covered), and economic security. Bowman has rejected 'fulfilment of personality' as the object of marriage. He says that it is not the purpose but the result of marriage.

According to Majumdar although regularized and socially sanctioned sex gratification is a basic reason for marriage (and the formation of family), yet it is not the only nor the final cause. He gives the example of Sema Nagas among whom a child marries his father's widows (other than his mother) to get possession of the property because according to their tribal custom, not the children but man's widows inherit his property. Thus, Mujumadar believes that the objects of marriage are: sex gratification, need for a dependable social mechanism for the care and rearing of children, transmission of culture, economic needs, and inheritance of property.

Today, as 'traditional' society is changing into a 'modern' one, these practical reasons for marriage have been relegated to a minor position. The main motivations of marriage now are believed to be escape from the feelings of loneliness and for the purpose of living through others. In simple words, we may say, the main object of marriage today appears to be 'companionship' or 'comradeship'. This does not exclude the object of sex-gratification from its scope. What is being suggested is that sex-gratification and all other objects today are secondary to the one mentioned above (that is, companionship).

In the traditional Hindu society, the main objects of marriage were believed to be: *dharma* (righteousness or the performance of duty), *praja* (progeny), and *rati* (pleasure). Of these, *dharma* was given the greatest importance, followed by procreation and sex-gratification. Daftri has also said that sexual enjoyment was not regarded as the sole objective of (Hindu) marriage. The primary object was *dharma* or the fulfilment of one's duties. There was, thus, little idea of 'individual interest' in Hindu marriage. Marriage was considered to be a 'social duty' towards the family and the community.

### 3.1.2 Hindu Marriage: A Sacrament

Marriage being mainly performed for *dharma* and not for pleasure, it was considered a sacrament among Hindus. Several reasons may be given for considering the Hindu marriage sacred: (i) *dharma* (fulfilment of religious duties) was the highest aim of marriage; (ii) performance of the religious ceremony included certain rites like *havan*, *kanyadan*, *panigrahana*, *saptapadi*, etc., which, being based on the sacred formula, were considered sacred; (iii) the rites were performed before *agni* (the most sacred God) by reciting *mantras* (passages) from Vedas (the most sacred scriptures) by a Brahmin (the most sacred person on earth); (iv) the union was considered indissoluble and irrevocable and husband and wife were bound to each other not only until death but even after the death; (v) though a man performed several sacraments during the course of his life, a woman performed only one sacrament of marriage in her life, hence its greatest importance for her; (vi) emphasis was on chastity of a woman and the faithfulness of a man; and (vii) marriage was considered to be a 'social duty' towards the family and the community and there was little idea of individual interest and aspiration.

Since Hindu marriage has undergone changes in the last few decades, does it continue to be sacred or it is to be treated as a contract? The two significant changes in Hindu marriage are that young people today marry not for performing duties but for companionship; and the marital relations are no longer unbreakable, as divorce is socially and legally permissible. Scholars are of the opinion that permitting

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divorce has not affected the sanctity of marriage because divorce is resorted to only as a last resort (when marital obligations are not fulfilled) and not to remarry. Similarly, though widow remarriage is sanctioned but such marriages are not practised on a wide scale. Mutual fidelity and devotion to partner are still considered to be an essence of marriage. So long marriage is not performed for sex gratification alone but for 'living together' and 'begetting children', marriage will continue to be a sacrament for Hindus. Freedom in marriage (mate selection, etc.) does not destroy but rather confirms the stability of marriage and purifies its practice. Kapadia has also said: "Marriage continues to be a sacrament; only it is raised to an ethical plane."


### 3.2 Forms of Marriage

In the Hindu society in the early period, eight modes of acquiring a wife were referred to, of which four were considered proper and desirable (*dharmya*) which had the approval of the father/family, and four were regarded as undesirable (*adharmya*) which did not have the approval of the father. The proper marriages recognized by the *Smritis* were Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, and Prajapatya, while the four undesirable marriages were Asura, Gandharva, Raksasa, and Paishacha.

In *Brahma*, the marriage is settled by the parents. A Brahmin is called to preside over the marriage rites, and the daughter is given by her father to the groom along with some dowry of ornaments and clothes, etc. In *Daiva*, the Brahmin who officiates over the ceremony is not paid any *dakshina* (gift) but is given daughter, properly bejeweled and decorated. In *Arsha*, the bride's father gets something from the groom – say a pair of cattle or two – in exchange for his daughter. This is just for the sake of the ceremony. In *Prajapatya*, though consent of parents is essential but no ceremony is performed. In *Asura*, bride-price is given by the groom to the bride's father. This is sort of an economic contract. There is no limit of the amount given. In *Gandharva*, neither is the consent of parents necessary nor are the rites or dowry essential. Only the will of the marrying parties is given importance. This marriage is believed to spring from desire and has sex satisfaction as its chief purpose. In *Raksasa*, marriage is by capture or abduction without obtaining the consent of the girl or her parents. This was practised in times when group conflicts and tribal wars were very common. The victorious groups used to carry away the girls of the conquered groups and keep them as 'keeps'. In *Paishacha*, a woman who is seduced when asleep or unconscious or when incapable of protecting herself is given the social status of a wife.

Of these eight forms of marriages, *Brahma* is considered to be the best marriage where a girl is given to a boy of merit in the same caste or in a caste of equal status. Both bride and groom in this marriage are supposed to be grown-up persons competent to give consent.

Besides the above forms of marriage, the type of marriage that was usually practised by the Hindus was *monogamous*, though we find some examples of *polygynous* marriages too in early and medieval times.



*Did u know?* The only example of *polyandrous* marriage is found in the Mahabhart – the marriage of Drupadi with five Pandavas.

### Polygyny

Polygyny is marriage of one male with more than one female, or what maybe called the 'plurality of wives'. Polygynous marriage may be unrestricted or conditional. In early Hindu society, it was the second type of polygynous marriage that was practised. According to Apastamba Dharmasutra, a man could marry again after ten years of his first marriage if his wife was barren, or he could marry after thirteen or fourteen years if he had only daughters from his wife and wanted a son. Manu has said that a man can supersede his first wife after eight years of his first marriage, if his wife is barren; after ten years if children produced by his wife do not remain alive; after eleven years if his wife produces only daughters; and immediately after the first marriage if his wife is quarrelsome,



rebellious, or harsh. In the Mahabharata, it is said that man who marries twice without any rational cause commits sin for which there is no penance. Nanda has said that a man who marries twice should not be accepted as a witness. Daftri has said that no doubt one could marry more wives than one at one and the same time, yet monogamy generally prevailed.

Today, polygyny has been legally prohibited. Bombay enacted a law in 1946, Madras in 1949 and Saurashtra in 1950, prescribing punishment for bigamy. All these legislations were repealed in 1955 when the Central Government enacted the Hindu Marriage Act. Besides the legal restrictions, people do not practice polygyny because: (1) nobody these days believes in the philosophy that one should have a son to attain salvation (*moksh*) or to provide him support in the old age; (2) maintaining higher living standards is not possible with more than one wife in the house; (3) plurality of wives increases tensions in the family; and (4) woman having become economically and socially independent refuses to accept man's dominance over her. Since practice of polygyny lowers the status of women, a girl refuses to marry a man who already possesses a wife.

## Polyandry

Polyandry is marriage of one woman with many men, that is, it is a practice involving plurality of husbands. The only example of Drupadi's marriage with five Pandavas in the Mahabharata period was justified by Yudhishtra on three bases: he cited other examples in which similar marriages were performed; he cited examples of some of his ancestors who had practised polyandry; and he described it as "mother's command" and obeying mother's command was son's *dharma*. Vyasa, however, described Drupadi's marriage as 'against usage' and as such against *dharma*; yet he wanted it to be accepted as preordained. In the Mahabharata itself, referring to polyandry, it is said: "To have many wives is no *dharma* on the part of men but to violate the duty owed to the first husband would be a great *adharm*a in the case of a woman.

In recent times, the Nairs amongst the Hindus in South India practised polyandry. But Westermarck, referring to these Nair marriages, has said that the polyandrous unions of the Nairs can hardly be called marriages, considering that they were of loosest and most fugitive character, that the male partners never lived with the woman and that the duties of fatherhood entirely were ignored. In 1896, the Malabar Marriage Act was passed which stabilized marriage among the Nairs. The marriage is now dissolved among the Nairs by application to the district judge.

On the basis of the above analysis, it may be logically concluded that in early India, polygyny was a rare practice, polyandry was not sanctioned, and monogamy was the only form of marriage practised. Manu has also said in *Manu Smriti*: "Let mutual fidelity continue until death. This may be considered as the summary of the highest law for husband and wife (see Kapadia, 1972: 97). Today, monogamy is highly valued and marriage continues to be considered a sacred and a social obligation. Though it is no longer an extravagant religious affair, yet principal religious ceremonies are still performed both at the bride's and the groom's homes.

## Mate Selection

All societies have mechanisms for controlling who gets married to whom. In the following pages, we will look systematically at three problems in mate selection: (i) the field of selection, that is, the restrictions imposed by religion, caste, class, kinship, etc. on acquiring a spouse; (ii) the party to selection, that is, who determines the choice of the marriage partner; and (iii) the criteria of selection, that is, what are the family and individual considerations in mate selection, or what are the attributes desired in the boy/girl to be selected for marriage. We will discuss all these factors separately.

### Field of Mate Selection

The general regulation of mate selection in Hindu society is subsumed under the concepts of endogamy, exogamy and hypergamy.

#### 1. Endogamy

Endogamy is a social rule that requires a person to select a spouse from within certain groups. These endogamous groups specifically refer to *varna*, caste and sub-caste. Thus, a Brahmin boy

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has not only to marry a Brahmin girl but a Kanyakubja boy has to marry a Kanyakubja girl, a Saryupari boy has to marry a Saryupari girl and a Gaur boy has to marry a Gaur girl. Kayastha is a caste which is divided into sub-castes like Mathur, Saxena, Srivastava, Bhatnagar, Nigam, etc. The marriage of a Kayastha boy, according to the rules of endogamy, has to be fixed not only in the same caste but in the same sub-caste too. Rajput caste is divided into four endogamous sub-groups: Suryavanshi, Chandravanshi, Nagvanshi and Agnivanshi. Suryavanshis are divided into three endogamous sub-castes: Gahlot, Kachchawa and Rathod. Gahlots are further sub-divided into three exogamous groups of Sisodia, Ranawat, and Suktawat; Kachchawas are sub-divided into three exogamous groups of Nathawat, Rajawat and Shekhawat; and Rathods are sub-divided into three exogamous groups of Jodha, Bika, and Bindawat. Similarly, Chandravanshis are sub-divided into three endogamous sub-castes of Jadu, Tanwar and Gaur while Nagvanshis have only one sub-caste of Parihariya. Agnivanshis are sub-divided into four sub-castes of Solanki, Panwar, Chauhan and Parihar. According to the rule of endogamy, a Rajput boy is to be married not only with a Rajput girl but also in his own endogamous group and sub-caste. Among the Baniyas, Oswal caste is divided into four sub-castes of Dhaya, Pancha, Dasa, and Bisa. Dhayas are sub-divided into (exogamous groups of) Luniya and Singhawat; Panchas into Kataria and Kothari; and Dasa into Dak, Bhandari and Mandot.

Caste endogamy was functional in early society because: (i) it made marital adjustment easier, (ii) it preserved the occupational secrets of the caste, (iii) it maintained the solidarity of the caste, and (iv) it checked decrease in the membership or strength of the castes. In the present society, however, except performing the first function, it does not perform any other function. On the contrary, it has proved to be dysfunctional. The negative effects of caste endogamy are that it creates: (i) inter-caste tensions which adversely affect the political unity of the country, (ii) the problem of marital adjustment because the field of selection remains limited and circumscribed, and (iii) problems of child marriage, dowry, and so forth.

## 2. Exogamy

Exogamy is a social rule which forbids selection of a spouse from certain groups. The two types of exogamy practised by Hindus are: *gotra* exogamy and *sapinda* exogamy. In a few cases, besides *gotra* and *sapinda*, village is also treated as an exogamous group. Raj Bali Pande (1949: 296-303) has referred to various theories of origin of exogamy as given by different scholars. MacLennan, in his book *Studies in Indian History*, writes that the custom of exogamy arose owing to the paucity of women in early times whereas L.H. Morgan, in his book *Ancient Society*, mentions that exogamy was introduced to prevent the early sexual promiscuity within the clan. According to Westermarck (*History of Human Marriage*, 1931), origin of exogamy was due to the absence of sexual attraction between persons who are brought up together whereas J.J. At-kinson (*Primal Law*), is of the view that exogamy came into origin because in primitive times, the patriarch of the family himself wanted to keep the young girls of the family for himself. So his jealousy drove the young men of the clan to seek their wives from outside. What was thus at first a necessity subsequently became a custom. Lastly, according to Durkheim, totem was responsible for evolving the custom of exogamy. The clan blood was regarded sacred and to spare the sacredness of the totem, one had to refrain from its appropriation for sexual purpose.

According to Valvalkar, the exogamous taboos were designed for the restriction of free marital relations between parents and offsprings and brothers and sisters. According to Kane (*History of Dharmasastras*, 1930), the exogamous prohibition was due to two reasons: one, if near relatives marry, their defects will be transmitted with aggravation to their offsprings; and two, the fear that there may be clandestine love affairs and consequent loss of morals.

However, all these theoretical explanations do not rationally explain exogamy as practised by Hindus. Firstly, it is not Hindus but the scheduled tribes who believe in totems. Secondly, people in early society were not so much concerned with morality. Thirdly, absence of sexual attraction between persons brought up together is the result and not the cause of prohibition. Fourthly, if the selection of girls from outside was to prevent the jealousy of the patriarch, was it not possible for the patriarch to appropriate the new-comers also? Finally, the concept of decay of lineage was not known to early people. It is, therefore, not easy to pinpoint the specific cause of the origin of the rule of exogamy

**(i) Gotra Exogamy**

*Gotra* is a group whose members are believed to have descended from a common mythical ancestor of a *rishi*. Initially, there were only eight *gotras* but gradually their number increased to thousands. The *gotra* exogamy prohibits marriage between members of the same *gotra*.

According to Altekar, there were no restrictions on *gotra* marriage up to 600 B.C. Kapadia (1972: 127) has also referred to non-existence of *gotra exogamy* in the Vedic period. His arguments are: (i) among the Aryans, not only *svayambar* but 'Gandharva' marriage was also practised, and (ii) the Aryans came to India from Iran, and no restrictions are found in Iran on *gotra* marriage. This means that after settling in Punjab, the Aryans must have practised *gotra* marriage for some time. It was Manu who imposed restrictions on marriage in one's own *gotra*. The restrictions on *gotra* marriage were removed in 1946 by the Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act. Today, people do not give much importance to this restriction.

**(ii) Sapinda Exogamy**

*Sapinda* means one who carries the particles of the same body. *Sapinda* relationship arises from being connected by having particles of the same ancestor. Marriage with such persons has been prohibited. But since there is no limit of persons related by blood, some limit is prescribed for avoiding persons for marriage related to each other within certain generations on the father's and the mother's side. Gautam has recommended to avoid seven generations from father's side and five generations from mother's side (cf. Kapadia, 1947: 126). Vasistha wanted to avoid only five generations from the father's side. Manu though has condemned marriage in the third generation but has not prescribed the exact number of generations on each side to be avoided in mate selection. Yajnavalkya like Gautam has suggested seven generations from father's side and five generations from mother's side to be avoided. But in practice and according to law, five generations from father's side and three generations from mother's side are avoided. However, breach of *sapinda* exogamy was never penalized, though breach of *gotra* exogamy was considered heinous practice.

Kapadia (1966: 127) has said that the rule of *sapinda* exogamy was of the nature of a pious recommendation and remained so till the end of the eighth century. Today, though this rule is followed by and large by all Hindus yet cases of cousin marriages are also not unknown.

**(iii) Cousin Marriage**

There are four types of cousins: *chachera* (father's brother's son/ daughter), *mamera* (mother's brother's son/daughter), *phuphera* (father's sister's son/daughter), and *mausera* (mother's sister's son/ daughter). Of these, *chachera* and *mausera* cousins (where the two sibling parents of the child belong to the same sex) are called 'parallel' cousins, and *mamema* and *phuphera* cousins (where the two sibling parents of the child are of opposite sex) are called 'cross' cousins.

Of these two forms of cousins, cross cousin marriage was practised in ancient Hindu society as shown by Hindu mythology records, though according to Macdonell and Keith (cf. Kapadia, 1947: 63) parallel cousin marriage was also sanctioned. Kapadia is, however, of the opinion that parallel cousin marriage was not practised by the Vedic Aryans and all examples of cousin marriages cited (for example, of Krishna, his son Pradyuman, Arjuna, his son Abhimanyu, Sahadeva – Arjuna's brother – marrying their cousin sisters) are of cross-cousin marriage, specifically *mamera* (maternal uncle's child) type of cross-cousin marriage.

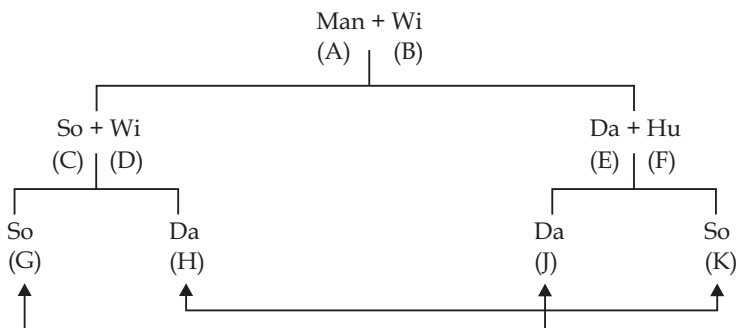
Manu has condemned cousin marriages. He has said: "He who approaches the daughter of his father's sister (*bhua*) or of his mother's sister (*mausi*) or of his mother's brother (*mama*) shall perform a penance. A wise man should not take as his wife any of these three because they are near relatives. He who approaches them sinks low" (see Kapadia, 1947: 125). Baudhayana, however, permitted cross-cousin marriage beyond 'Narmada' as a peculiar cultural trait of the people of that region. Kapadia (*Ibid*: 125) has maintained that it is quite clear that in the *Dharmasutras*, the marriage of cross-cousins, which was allowed in the time of Brahmanas had come to be discredited and upheld as proper only in those parts of the country where it could be justified because of the peculiar social conditions. Since the chronological

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order of our religious scriptures has been described as Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, Grahsutras, Dharmasutras, Smritis, Epics and Puranas, it is no wonder that Manu in his *Smriti* denounced cousin marriages.

According to Richards, origin of *mamera* (maternal uncle's child) type of cross-cousin marriage lies in the system of inheritance. In matriarchal societies, daughters inherited mother's property and son inherited maternal uncle's property.

Diagram Showing Cousin Marriages



In the above diagram, 'B's' property, goes to 'E' and 'E's' property, goes to 'J' but 'C's' property goes to 'K' (sister's son). He, therefore, marries 'K' with his daughter 'H'. Similarly, 'G' is married with 'J' because 'F's' property goes to his sister's son 'G'. It is, thus, the system of inheritance of the property which led to the practice of cross-cousin marriage. This explanation has not been accepted by scholars because Krishna, Arjuna, etc. did not belong to matrilineal society. According to Rivers and Ghurye, the origin of cross-cousin marriage lies in the practice of dual organization, that is, dichotomous division of population into two exogamous groups, according to which a boy of one group has to marry a girl of the other group. For example, Kathis (a caste) of Kathiawar in Saurashtra, Gujarat are divided into two exogamous groups of Sakhayat and Auratiya. Families belonging to Sakhayat division do not marry among themselves but seek a bride from or give a daughter to the members of other division. Similarly, Maria Gonds of Bastar (Madhya Pradesh) who practice cross-cousin marriage, are also divided into two exogamous divisions, one consisting of ninety septs and other sixty-nine septs. All the septs of one division regard themselves as *dadabhai* (brothers) or parallel cousins and marriage between them is prohibited. But they regard the members of the other division as *mamabhai*, that is, maternal cross-cousins. Therefore, people of one division marry with persons of other division. In South India also, there are many castes which have dual organization and practice cross-cousin marriage.

Does this mean that only those castes practice cross-cousin marriages which have dual organization? It is not so. For example, it is said that the Garasias in Gujarat and the Rajputs in Rajasthan at one time practised cross-cousin marriages, though they had no dual organization. Dual organization is generally followed among the Dravidians. Does it follow that the Dravidians originally practised cross-cousin marriages and the Aryans imitated them? According to Kapadia (1947: 65) the answer is 'No'. Had Aryans imitated marriage with maternal uncle's (*mama's*) daughter, why did they not imitate marriage with father's sister's (*bhua's*) daughter? Also, why did not Aryans outrightly condemn parallel cousin marriage as it was condemned by the Dravidian society? Therefore, cousin marriage must be looked upon as a natural result of the Aryan's own emphasis on unilateral agnatic counting. A theory has been propounded that cousin marriage was practised to increase affection between brother and sister. Iravati Karve (1953: 219) has said that marriage in the south is not arranged with a view to widen kin-group but each marriage strengthens already existing bonds and makes doubly near those people who were already very near him. But it will be irrational and illogical to link the practise of cousin marriage with strengthening of kinship bonds.

Whatever be the origin of cousin marriage, the question today is: Should cousin marriages be practised in this age? This question first drew the attention of people in India in 1959 when a news item appeared in the national papers that a Hindu boy and a girl who were related as cousins and wanted to marry flee to Pakistan, converted themselves to Islam and married according to the Muslim rites. *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (Bombay) at that time invited opinions of people and published them for weeks together as "Letters to the Editor". The main arguments given for and against cousin marriages were biological, social, psychological, and cultural. Broadly, the arguments against cousin marriages are: (i) it will lead to biological degeneration of family because parental defects will be transmitted to their children; (ii) it will create clandestine relations between primary kins in the family and thereby lead to immorality; and (iii) it will be against our religious dictations. The arguments in favour of cousin marriages are: (i) one's property will remain in one's own family; (ii) it will create strong bond of love between brother and sister; and (iii) with the breakdown of joint family, cousins no longer live together in the same house. If social changes like giving right of divorce to a person, giving a share to daughter in her father's property, and imposing restrictions on giving and taking dowry can be accepted, what is the harm in accepting the social practice of cousin marriage?

The counter arguments against the arguments given against cousin marriages are: (i) Muslims practice cousin marriage but their community has not disorganized. How do then we say that practising cousin marriage will disorganize the Hindu society? (ii) The argument that cousin marriages will lead to the decay of families because parental defects will be transmitted to their children is ludicrous. Even in marriages where boys and girls are unknown and not related to each other, there is no practice of medical examination before marriage. What is then the guarantee that in such marriages, the parental defects will not be transmitted to children? (iii) The argument that cousin marriages should not be practised because they are not permitted by religion is also illogical because social practices need not be linked with religion. What was not good in early period may be good in the present times. We should change our social practices only by considering their functional and dysfunctional aspects. Besides, there are many social practices which are not permitted by our religion yet we practise them today because they are found functional, for example, widow remarriage, divorce, abolition of *sati* practice, and so forth.

It may, therefore, be held that in an age in which individual choice of a partner in marriage has come to be recognized as necessary and desirable even by the older generation, any artificial shackles in the form of exogamous restrictions are outmoded. Removing unnecessary restrictions which have no cultural, social or biological significance will widen the area of mate selection and increase the possibility of selecting a mate of one's own choice and leading a happy married life. Further, if at all any generational restriction is to be imposed, the limit should be three generations only, since in the modern age, the family is rarely a unit of more than three generations.

### 3. Hypergamy

Hypergamy (*anuloma*) is a social practice according to which a boy from upper caste can marry a girl from lower caste and vice-versa. For example, Khatris (a caste) are divided into four hypergamous groups: Dhaighar Chorghar, Baraghar, and Bawanjati. A boy of Dhaighar can marry a girl not only from Dhaighar (according to the rule of endogamy) but from any of the three lower groups of Chorghar, Baraghar and Bawanjati (according to the rules of hypergamy); but a girl from Dhaighar has to marry a boy of Dhaighar only. Similarly, Kannauj Brahmins are sub-divided into three sub-groups of Khatkul, Panchdhari and Dhakra. According to hyper-gamous rules, a Khatkul boy can marry a Panchdhari or a Dhakra girl but a Dhakra boy can marry only a Dhakra girl.

Though hypergamy was sanctioned yet marriage of a Sudra girl with a higher *varna*/caste boy was condemned. Manu (cf. Kapadia, 1972: 102) has also maintained that twice-born men who in their folly wed wives of a low *varna*/caste soon degrade their families and their children to the state of a Sudra. The gods will not eat the offerings of the men who perform rites in their honour chiefly with a Sudra wife's assistance.



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Why was hypergamy advocated at all? According to Kapadia (*Ibid:* 104), it sought to fix permanently a social hierarchy in which the ascendancy of the Brahmin over the Kshatriya was categorically asserted. He has further said that hypergamy helped considerably the endogamous tendency of the Brahmins which found expression during their stay in the Gangetic valley. Thus, Kapadia (*Ibid:* 104) concludes that the rule of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages has greater significance for the caste structure of Hindu society than for the marriage pattern of the Hindus.

### Party to Mate Selection

Who selects the partner for the marriage of a boy and/or a girl? Is selection left to an individual acquiring a mate and parents remain indifferent to the attributes of the mate selected, or is it the parents who have a dominant voice in the matter, or do parents and children together select the spouse keeping in mind the needs of the family as well as the interests of the person acquiring a spouse?

In the man-woman relationship based on marriage, the personalities of individuals involved are significant because it is the personality that makes or mars the process of adjustment. This requires full freedom in selecting one's mate. But in India, this freedom was denied till recently. Margaret Cormack's study in 1959 of 500 students from different states like Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala and the union territory of Delhi revealed that in 92 per cent cases, ego's parents' marriage was arranged by their parents while only in 8 per cent cases it was a self-arranged marriage. Since last three to four decades, however, we find that parents have started consulting their children in mate selection. Initially, they consulted only sons but later on even daughters also came to be consulted. In a few cases, children select their own partners and settle their marriages without consulting their parents. It could thus be said that change in the process of mate selection is from 'parental' to 'joint' selection.

Children do not want complete freedom of selecting the partners by themselves. They want that parents and children should jointly select the partners. B.V. Shah's study (1964) of 200 students of Baroda University showed that 66.5 per cent students wanted to select their brides in consultation with their parents, 32.5 per cent wanted to give more importance to their own voice, and only 1.0 per cent would go exclusively by parents' choice. Students of the first category wanted to associate their parents in mate selection to avoid unnecessarily inviting tensions in their life by marrying against the wishes of their parents; students of the second category were in favour of giving more voice to themselves because they thought that it is the children and not the parents who are to bear the consequences of marriage—good or bad—throughout the rest of their life; and the students of the third category wanted to depend completely on their parents for selecting their mates because they thought their parents are old and more experienced and therefore are in a better position to view things properly for them. Margaret Cormack also found in her study that in 78 per cent cases, students wanted that marriages should be arranged by parents with the consent of their children, in 3 per cent cases, they wanted the arrangement of marriages by parents without the consent of the children, and in 32 per cent cases, students said that marriages should be by one's own choice. But when asked, how would their partners be selected, 48 per cent students told that they would have an arranged marriage, and 46 per cent said that they would be allowed to do as they wished.

In a two-generational sociological study on mate selection conducted in 1984 in Jaipur, 120 males and females (sixty each) of 18-35 years age-group belonging to different classes, linguistic communities and educational level were studied. Of these, sixty (thirty each) were married and sixty (thirty each) unmarried. The study revealed that in ego's parents' generation, in 98.3 per cent cases, interviewees' parents' marriages were arranged without their approval and only in 1.7 per cent cases, it was self-arranged marriage with parents' approval. In the ego's generation, in 80 per cent cases, marriages were arranged by parents and in 20 per cent cases, they were self-arranged marriages. This shows that though the modern youth clamour for a right to select their brides/grooms themselves, yet left to themselves, they view the selection of a partner as a family concern.

Vimal Shah (1975) also studied 281 Hindu graduate students (boys and girls of high, intermediate and low castes) of Gujarat University during 1960-61 to analyze students' attitudes towards arranged marriage and whether they would select their mate through parents or through self-choice. With

reference to belief in an arranged marriage, he found that 92.2 per cent girls and 65.9 per cent boys believed in arranged marriage; 68.4 per cent girls and 62.0 per cent boys said that they would select their mate through parents and relations; 4.0 per cent girls and 7.3 per cent boys wanted mate selection through self-choice; and 27.6 per cent girls and 30.7 per cent boys wanted mate selection through self-choice and consent of parents. This points out (i) young persons' more adherence to and lesser deviation from the traditional norms, and (ii) a considerable higher proportion of females than males giving high priority to family considerations and traditional ideology.

In this age, matrimonial advertisements have also come to be used in mate selection. In this context, a few studies conducted on mate selection by matrimonial advertisements give some relevant information. These studies point out that the matrimonial advertisements as a process of mate selection are generally used by urban, educated and relatively rich people. But what is significant is that it is the parents who advertise, scrutinize, check background, correspond, and decide who should be called for the interview. Children are only consulted and informed. The analysis of the 'most desired qualities' (caste, beauty, age, education, influential family, and accomplishments for girls; and caste, occupation income, age, education for boys) shows conformity as well as deviation from the traditional basis of selection. People use advertisements only when they fail to select partners for their children through normal means and/or because it provides a wider area of selection. Yet many people dislike this method because what is advertised does not always reflect the accurate qualities of the advertiser.

### Criteria of Mate Selection

Parents have different considerations in selecting mates for their children, since they consider marriage a family affair. They lay considerable emphasis on the reputation of the prospective partner's family, morality of the family members, wealth of the family, physical fitness of the boy/girl, character and potency of the girl/boy, girl's training, and boy's service and income.

While children are given an opportunity of self-choice, they give importance to factors like character, education, training, intellect, personal charm, etc. rather than caste, dowry and such factors. B.V. Shah (1964: 89-94) in his study of 200 college students in Baroda found that the 'group' considerations for the parents were: culture and *sanskars* of the girl (80%), family status (56%), girl's equipment (14%), economic condition of the family (11%), and girl's education (6.5%). Against this, the 'individual' considerations for the children were: education (98.5%), physical qualities like appearance and health (79.5%), equipments like cooking ability and readiness for service (18.5%), and economic status (11%). Thus, parents were found 'partial deviants' (giving importance to both group and individual considerations) in 91.5 per cent cases, 'total deviants' (giving importance only to individual considerations) in 7.0 per cent cases, and 'traditionalists' (giving importance only to groups considerations) in 1.5 per cent cases. Margaret Cormack in her study (1965:93) noticed that 'character' and 'education' got the first and the second preference in mate selection both by boys and girls. After these two considerations, boys gave importance to love, domestic training and beauty in order of priority in the selection of girls. They gave the tenth priority to caste and the eleventh to dowry. Against this, girls gave importance (after character and education) to age and job. Handsomeness was given the ninth priority, followed by family background, and caste. The first four qualities described as 'undesirable' by boys (in the selection of girls) were: fickle-mindedness, drinking and smoking, stupidity, and low education; while girls described immorality, low education, ugliness and arrogance as undesirable qualities.

Vimal Shah also studied 281 students of Gujarat University during 1960-61 to analyze the familial and individual qualities desired by them in mate selection. According to him (1975: 301), the boys gave priority to nature (71.7%), education (70.7%), appearance (58.1%), personality (44.9%), efficiency in work (39.5%), social status (12.2%) and economic condition (10.7%) in selecting wives. Against this, the girls gave importance to nature (88.2%), education (88.2%), personality (56.9%), economic condition (43.1%), efficiency in work (39.2%), appearance (33.3%) and social status (9.8%). This points out that while girls were more concerned with the economic well-being, boys were more concerned with the efficiency in the household work of their mates.

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My contention is that in the present age, besides the above-mentioned factors, children keep five other factors also in their unconscious mind in mate selection. These are: (i) parental image, (ii) complementary needs, (iii) homogamy/heterogamy in characteristics, (iv) acquaintance, and (v) consciousness of kind.

The *parental image* refers to the influence of a parent's image (father in the case of girls and mother in the case of boys) upon marital choice. The kind of individual whom a young boy/girl will love or hate, embrace or avoid is determined largely by the kind of people he/she has learned to love or hate as a child. The individual whom one chooses as a mate will resemble or be different from one's own parents in just those important physical and personality traits, the young boy/girl liked or disliked in his/her parents when he/she was a child. Thus, if a young girl finds her father a drunkard, a wife-beater, a lethargic, a liar, etc., she would not like to select a boy as a husband who has similar characteristics. Similarly, if a boy finds his mother spending too much time in kitty parties, avoiding home-work, too fond of ornaments and cosmetics, etc., he would like to avoid these characteristics in a girl he would select as his wife. On the other hand, if a girl finds her father hard-working, helpful, devoted to family, committed to work, and so forth, she would prefer to have her husband of similar qualities. This is called 'parental image' in mate selection.

The *complementary needs* in mate selection refers to choosing a marriage partner whose 'need pattern' will be complementary (but not similar) to one's own need pattern. According to the theory of complementary needs, if a girl is fond of cooking new food items, she would like her husband to be one who likes and appreciates cooking of new variety of things. If a boy has love for music or art, he would like to have a wife who has a liking for listening to music and appreciating art.

*Homogamy/heterogamy* refers to giving preference to similar as well as opposite characteristics of the spouse. For example, if a boy is extravagant, he would prefer to have a little miserly type of girl as his spouse (this is heterogamy), but if he is highly educated, he would prefer a wife who is almost equally educated (this is homogamy).

*Acquaintance* refers to the fact that 'somebody' – known to boy's and/or girl's parents/relatives – knows the boy or the girl who is being considered for marriage. This acquaintance will give some background or basis of determining whether he/she can be considered for marriage or not.

Lastly, *consciousness of kind* refers to an individual's wish to marry a person of his own kind or from his own cultural background, that is, same religion, region, community, caste, and class, etc. This is based on the belief that if both partners belong to the same environment, marital adjustment would be easier.

The above-mentioned five factors would, however, operate only when the marriage partners are chosen by the children themselves. It is not to be expected that these qualities would be operative in a setting where marriages are arranged. In spite of the above considerations, what one 'likes' is different from what one 'needs', and what one 'needs' is different from what one is 'likely to get'. One may like a glamorous girl, needs a working girl, but what he may actually get may be moderately educated and a tolerably good-looking girl.

It may be concluded that though a large majority of the youth would select their bride on the basis of her individual qualities and their own individual needs, but they would give an almost equal importance to the bride's membership of a particular group or family and to her adjustability to their family and its environment.

### The Emerging Trend

A new trend is emerging in the process of mate selection among the middle and the upper-class educated youth in the urban areas. The parents select the partners for their children and engage them also. But before performing the marriage, they permit them to mix with and know each other. The boys and girls go to restaurants, visit movies, or go to gardens, together. In this process of interaction, they pass through three stages before finally deciding to marry. Following Murstein (1971: 100-151), these stages may be described as stimulus stage, value stage, and role stage. In the first stage, the

boys and girls are first attracted to one another by their perceptions of partner's attractive qualities. These qualities are both physical and social: good looks, tallness, tolerance, joviality, considerate personality, and so on. Without being wholly aware of it, each partner prepares a mental balance-sheet, comparing the other's attractive and unattractive features and then comparing them with his or her own. If one partner is substantially less attractive than the other, he/she is likely to break off the relationship. If the couple are fairly evenly matched, the relationship may develop on into the value stage. In this stage, the partners discuss their attitudes towards joint family, familial obligations, woman's higher education, woman's job, family budget, ownership of house, etc. The more similar the discovered values, the stronger their attraction to one another becomes, and the more time they spend together or talk on phone or write letters to each other. Some couples marry at this point but some move on into the role stage. In this stage, they not only hear each other's expressed values but they see how those values are expressed in real-life situations. They see whether the other partner is cheerful or moody, generous or selfish, dependable or erratic, forgiving or intolerant, dominant or submissive, and so on. The more they interact, the more they perceive what it would be like to be married to one another. If the perception and attitudes are favourable, marriage is sure to be the outcome. And it is bound to be a successful marriage.

But this type of free interaction between boys and girls before marriage is totally absent in rural areas. In urban areas also, the lower and the middle-middle class people do not believe in giving such freedom to their children. The upper-middle and the upper-class people too not only remain apprehensive of pre-marital sex relations between the children but of the increasing possibility of rejecting the girls by the boys in our culture. The result is that after the marriage, the marital adjustment between the partners with different attitudes and beliefs becomes difficult leading to frequent conflicts, separation, desertion and sometimes divorce. I would not call this as 'over-rationalizing' the process of mate selection. My emphasis on careful marital choice of a spouse by parents and children seems to imply that choosing the mate 'rationally' and determining the 'right' age of marriage will not only help in eliminating the 'chance' element in the success of marriage but will also help in achieving the real objects of marriage in this age.

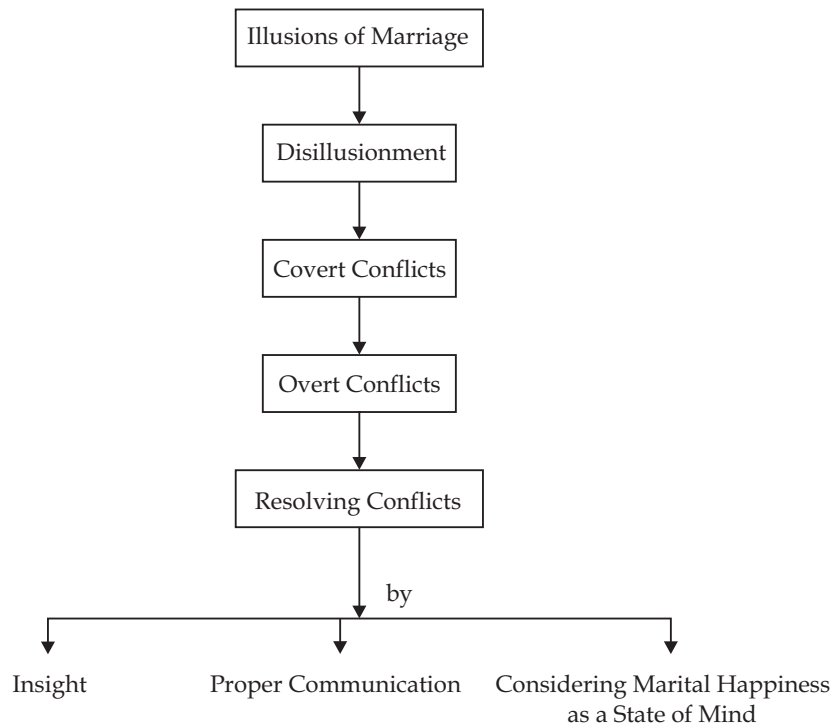
### **Marital Adjustment**

Marriage, in reality, is a way of living. It is not always full of roses; but its success depends upon adjustment on the part of both the partners involved. Whether marriage is arranged or a love marriage, in initial days both partners want to impress upon each other. The sexual excitement and the novelties of new relationship lift the partners out of themselves for a time. Each partner considers other as an extraordinary person. Each feels mildly intoxicated. This intoxication is reinforced by the new status, acquiring new possessions, and establishing new relationships. They overlook each other's defects and weaknesses and live under several illusions. Then comes gradually a stage of disillusionment. The first time when husband comes late, wife feels that he no longer cares for her. The first time when wife oversleeps and fails to give lunch-box to her husband before going to office, husband feels that she is lethargic and irresponsible. The opportunities for complaints against each other go on increasing. Husband starts occasionally rebuffing his wife and wife occasionally starts writing against husband to her parents. The illusion is broken and partner's deficiencies come to surface. The shattering of dreams is painful and the disillusionment starts conflict.

Initially, the disagreements and complaints do not lead to open fighting. Occasionally, they handle the quarrels by not indulging in behaviour overtly which may offend the other partner but sometimes they act in ways that do not make sense unless one is willing to assume that certain functions of the behaviour are different from the apparent ones. The covert conflict in marriage is difficult to estimate, yet it indicates 'emotional withholdings' in many relationships that reveal under-cover hostility. Then emerges overt conflict. Wife occasionally weeps and husband goes without food. The examples could be multiplied and turned against husband and wife equally. The point is that in these bitter attacks upon one another, the partners may soon destroy the basis upon which their relationship is built. Particular conflicts may be solved and adjustments may be worked out but the new ones may reappear. However, the disruption of the relationship may not be great. The couple resolves basic issues before too much damage is done and the marriage is broken.

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Diagram Showing Marital Adjustment



The resolving of conflicts depends upon insight, proper communication, and considering conflicts as normal. 'Insight' refers to the feeling which the partner develops pertaining to his/her own behaviour and that of his/her spouse. One quickly recognizes the consequences of one's action and takes to behaviour that lessens the hurt and fear. The more insightful partner soon influences the other partner by making some sacrifices and giving more importance to other's interests and needs. 'Proper communication' is 'talking problems' freely and frankly with the spouse so that he/she 'understands' rationally and compromises and co-operates. Lastly, one has to learn to live in the world of 'reality' and understand that happiness is a state of mind and success of marriage depends upon 'give and take' attitude. All these stages in the marital adjustment may be shown diagrammatically as above:

A well-adjusted marriage is one in which the two partners: (i) demonstrate affection for each other externally, (ii) have mutual confidence in each other, (iii) attempt to share common interests, (iv) husband helps his wife in household chores and children's care, and wife loves and respects husband's parents and siblings, (v) respect each other's aspirations, (vi) give importance to each other's role commitments, and (vii) care for each other's loneliness and miserableness.

In short, marital adjustment depends upon:

- Age at marriage and social maturity of partners.
- Availability of money for gratification of basic needs.
- Differences in social and educational background.
- Capacity of sacrifice.
- Nature and temperament of in-laws.
- Spouse's potentiality of changing habits.
- Size of husband's family.
- Security and stability of occupation.
- Mutual desire and care for children.



Analyzing the nature and level of marital adjustment, we may point out five types of marital relationships, following Cuber and Harroff (cf. Leslie, 1982: 462-463). These are:

### 1. Conflict-habituated Relationships

In this, there is much conflict between husband and wife, although largely controlled. At worst, there is some quarreling and nagging of which the members of immediate family or friends or relatives have some awareness. But in the presence of others, the couple is discreet and polite.

### 2. Devitalized Relationships

In this, the relationship between husband and wife is devoid of zest. There is typically no serious conflict but the interplay between the pair is lifeless and devoid of vital meaning. There is, however, no serious threat to marriage.

### 3. Passive Congenial Relationships

In this, there is little suggestion of disillusionment and the modes of association between husband and wife are comfortably adequate. There is little conflict and the couple enjoys many common interests. Partners remain passively content with marriage.

### 4. Vital Relationships

In this, the importance of any one aspect of marital relationship is shared by husband and wife and other things are readily sacrificed to it.

### 5. Total Relationships

In this, the multi-faceted relationship is shared by the two partners. Though this type of relationship is rare in marriage but it does exist.

## Changes in Marriage System

The changes in the marriage system of Hindus may be analyzed in seven areas: (i) change in the object of marriage, that is, from *dharma* as the chief object to companionship as the main object, (ii) change in the form of marriage, that is, from plurality of partners or polygamy to one partner or monogamy, (iii) change in the process of mate selection, that is, change in the field of selection (permissibility of inter-caste marriages), change in party to selection (that is, from parental selection to joint and individual selection) and change in criteria of selection (that is, change in family and individual considerations), (iv) change in the age for marriage that is, from pre-puberty to post-puberty marriage, (v) change in the stability of marriage, that is, introducing divorce in Hindu society, (vi) change in the economic aspect of marriage, that is, in the dowry system, and (vii) widow remarriage. Of these, changes in three areas (in object, form, and mate selection) have been discussed in this chapter (in the preceding pages), while changes in four areas (in age at marriage, divorce, dowry, and inter-caste marriage) have been discussed in eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh chapters of this book.

## Marriage Legislation

In March 1961, when the bill on unequal marriages was being discussed in the Rajya Sabha, one member quoted epics against interference with the institution of Hindu marriage. Dr. Radhakrishnan, the then chairman of the Rajya Sabha, had remarked: "The ancient history cannot solve the problems of modern society." This is an answer in one sentence to those critics who want to maintain a gap between social opinion and social legislation. Legislation must meet the social needs of the people; and because the social needs change, legislation also must change from time to time. The function of social legislation is to adjust the legal system continually to a society which is constantly outgrowing that system. The gulf between the current needs of the society and the old laws must be bridged. The law has got to give recognition to certain *de facto* changes in society.

One of the changes in modern India is the change in the attitude towards marriage; hence the necessity of laws on different aspects of marriage.

The laws enacted in India relate to: (i) age at marriage, (ii) field of mate selection, (iii) number of spouses in marriage, (iv) breaking of marriage, (v) dowry to be given and taken, and (vi) remarriage.

## Notes

The important legislations relating to these six aspects of marriage passed from time to time are: (i) The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (dealing with age at marriage), (ii) The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act, 1946 and Hindu Marriages Validity Act, 1949 (dealing with field of mate selection), (iii) The Special Marriage Act, 1954 (dealing with age at marriage, freedom to children in marriage without parental consent, bigamy, and breaking up of marriage), (iv) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (dealing with age at marriage with the consent of parents' bigamy, and breaking up of marriage) (v) The Dowry Act, 1961, and (vi) The Widow Remarriage Act, 1856.

### 3.3 Marriage among Muslims

Muslim society is stratified not only among Shias and Sunnis but also among Ashraf (Saiyed, Sheikh, Pathan, etc.), Azlab (Momins, Mansooris, Ibrahims, etc.) and Arzal (Halalkhor, etc.). The Ashrafs are the noble-born, the Azlabs are low-born, and the Arzals are the lowest of all. All these groups are endogamous and inter-marriages among them are condemned and discouraged.

Muslim marriage, called *nikah*, unlike the sacramental marriage of the Hindus, is considered to be a civil contract. Its important objectives are: control over sex, procreation of children and perpetuation of family, upbringing of children, and ordering of domestic life. S.C. Sarkar also maintains that marriage among Muslims is a civil contract. But it will be wrong to say that Muslim marriage has no religious duty. It is a devotion and an act of *ibaddat*. Jang (1953) is, therefore, more correct in maintaining that *nikah*, though essentially a contract, is also a devotional act. But it is surely not a sacrament like Hindus.

The Muslim marriage has five features: (i) proposal and its acceptance, (ii) capacity to contract marriage, (iii) doctrine of equality, (iv) preference system, and (v) *mahar*. The proposal is made by the bride-groom to the bride just before the wedding ceremony in the presence of two witnesses and a *Maulvi* (priest). For recognising marriage as *sahi* (regular), it is necessary that both the proposal and its acceptance must be at the same meeting. Not doing so makes marriage 'fasid' (irregular) but not *batil* (invalid). Further, female testimony has been rejected in Muslim marriage. *Fasid* marriage can be converted into *sahi* marriage but not the *batil* one. Examples of *fasid* marriages are: absence of witnesses at the time of making and accepting the proposal, fifth marriage of a man, marriage of a woman during the period when she is undergoing *iddat* (period of seclusion for three menstrual periods after husband's death or divorce), and difference of religion between husband and wife. Examples of *batil* marriages are: marriage with a person who worships idol or fire, polyandry, and marriage with some consanguineous kin (say, father's sister, mother's sister, own sister or brother, sister's daughter, son's wife and so on). The feature of *capacity to contract marriage* refers to not recognising child marriage or marriage of a person of an unsound mind. The Shia law gives the right to the guardian of a minor to contract his/her marriage. The marriage contracted by the *fazuli* relative of a minor gives the right to the minor to ratify the marriage on attaining puberty. The practice of ratification and option of repudiation is called *khairulbalig*. The *doctrine of equality* refers to marriage with a person of low status. Such marriages are looked down upon. Similarly, runaway marriages (called *kifa*) are also not recognised. The *preferential system* refers to giving preference first to parallel (*chachera* and *mausera*) cousin and then to cross-cousin (only *mamera* but not *phuphera*). But these days, cousin marriages are discouraged. *Mahr* (dower) custom in marriage refers to money which a wife is entitled to get from her husband in consideration of marriage. *Mahr* can be *specified* (fixed) or *proper* (considered reasonable). It can also be *prompt* (payable on husband's death or divorce) or *deferred*. At one time, the Muslims had a practice of *muta* (temporary) marriage but that practice has been abolished now.

*Divorce (talaq)* in Muslim society can be given with or without the intervention of the court. A woman can divorce her husband only through the court but a man can divorce his wife without approaching the court and by making a single pronouncement during one *tuhr* (one menstruation period, i.e., one month) (called *Talaq-e-Ahasan*) or three pronouncements in three *tuhrs* (called *Talaq-e-Hasan*) or three pronouncements in a single *tuhr* (called *Talaq-e-Ullbidat*). In addition to these three types of divorce, there are three other kinds of divorce too: *illa*, *zihar*, and *lian*. In *illa*, the husband swears by *Allah* (God) to abstain from sexual relations with his wife for a period of four or more months or for a specified period. After making *ilia*, if he really abstains from sexual intercourse, the marriage is considered to be dissolved. In *zihar*, the husband declares in the presence of two witnesses that his

wife is like a mother to him. *Zihar* does not dissolve the marriage but it provides a ground to the wife to sue her husband for divorce. In *lian*, the husband accuses his wife of adultery. This provides ground to wife to approach the court for divorce. Divorce given by mutual consent of husband and wife is called *khula* (initiated at the instance of the wife) or *mubarat* (initiative coming from wife or husband). After divorce, the wife is not entitled to get maintenance allowance from her husband. However, about fifteen years ago, the Supreme Court allowed maintenance allowance to one Shah Bano. Since this decision was questioned by the Muslim leaders, describing it as interference the Muslim Personal Law, the government had to amend the legislation. In February 1993, the Uttar Pradesh High Court also ordered the payment of maintenance allowance to one Hameedan and her two children. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board then filed a review petition in the High Court.

All these features point out the difference between the Hindu and the Muslim marriages in terms of aims and ideals of marriage, nature of marriage, characteristics of marriage, and dissolving marriage.

It is now contended that the belief that Muslims practise polygyny and easy divorce in large numbers is a misconception. The number of Muslims who have more than one wife is negligible now. There are more cases of bigamy amongst Hindus. Likewise, there are more divorces among Hindus and Sikhs than among Muslims. The statistics compiled by the Indian Statistical Institute reveal that 72 out of 1,000 non-Muslims have more than one wife while only 15 out of 1,000 Muslim males have more than one wife (*Hindustan Times*, June 27, 1998). Earlier, the report compiled by the Committee on the Status of Women, published in 1975 had also revealed that the incidence of polygamy was the highest among tribals (15.25%), followed by Buddhists (7.97%), Jains (6.75%), Hindus (5.8%), and Muslims (5.7%) (Shaukat Ali, 1995).

### Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

The unilateral divorce and polygyny among Muslims is so much criticised that many people clamour for uniform civil code regarding marriage. The Muslims oppose it because they not only consider it interference in Muslim personal laws but also because the content of the UCC will be mainly drawn from the Hindu Act. A survey was conducted among 395 persons (187 Hindu and 208 Muslims) in Aligarh in 1995 by the Institute for Development Studies (*The Hindustan Times*, January 1, 1996). About 60 percent of the total respondents expressed undesirability of the UCC irrespective of their religious background. On the other hand, on religious background basis, 74 per cent Hindus and 9 per cent Muslims expressed the desirability of the UCC. The arguments in favour of the UCC were: (1) national integration and secularism will be promoted; (2) growing communal and caste violence will be contained; (3) the process of civil justice will be strengthened; and (4) the gender biases will be mitigated and feelings of equality amongst women will be perpetuated. The 34 Muslims who supported the UCC were professional and white-collared persons (doctors, lawyers, engineers, college teachers, office workers and students). The arguments against the UCC were: (1) Muslims themselves do not feel any necessity for the change. (2) The political groups are exploiting the religious sentiments of the people for creating their vote bank. (3) Muslims hold that Hindus are trying to impose their cultural values on Muslims as the provisions in the UCC are mainly taken from the Hindu law. (4) The UCC will generate heat, discontent and intolerance among different religious groups, particularly amongst minorities. (5) Most Muslims hold that the UCC will tantamount to a denial of the fundamental right of freedom to religion and will hamper the development of the concept 'unity in diversity'. The Hindus, however, do not share this opinion. It may be averred that if the UCC is not perceived from the 'religious' perspective but is viewed as a measure to check evils of polygyny and easy verbal divorce, a detailed discussion with non-orthodox religious leaders of different communities can help in the formulation of legislation.

### Difference between Hindu and Muslim Marriages

Hindu and Muslim marriages may be differentiated on four bases: (i) aims and ideals, (ii) features of the marriage system, (iii) nature of marriage, and (iv) marriage relations.

Notes

*Aims and Ideals*

In Hindu marriage, religion and religious sentiments play an important role but not in Muslim marriage. Hindu marriage is performed with two religious objects: one, it is the religious duty of every Hindu to marry; and two, one must beget a son who may offer *pitra-dan* to *pitras*. All religious rites are recognized only when performed by husband and wife together. Unlike Hindu marriage, Muslim *nikah* is just a contract to enter into sex relations and produce children.

*Features of the Marriage System*

Muslim marriage is characterized by 'proposal' and its 'acceptance'. The proposal is to come from the boy's side and it has to be accepted in the same meeting in which it is proposed, in the presence of two witnesses. Hindus do not have such custom. Muslims emphasize on the capacity of a person to contract marriage but Hindus do not believe in such capacity of making the contract. Muslims practise dower but Hindus have no dower system. Muslims practise polygyny but Hindus reject such practice. Muslims have a preferential system in mate selection but Hindus do not have such a system. Lastly, unlike Muslims, Hindus do not have irregular or void marriages.

*Nature of Marriage*

Muslims practise temporary marriages (*muta*) but Hindus do not. Hindus do not observe *iddat* for contracting marriages. Lastly, Hindus look down upon the widow remarriage but Muslims do not.

*Marriage Relations*

Amongst Hindus, the marriage relations are dissolved only after death but amongst Muslims, these can be dissolved at the whims of the males. Muslim males can divorce their wives without the intervention of the court (by mere renouncement) but Hindus can break the marriage only through the court.

*Need for Change in Social Legislation*

Muslims, particularly the educated ones, have come to realize that the social legislation and religious prescriptions on marriage need to be changed for various reasons: (1) the old law cannot serve the needs of an industrial civilization; (2) education has broadened the outlook of the people and they want to be more modern in social practices; (3) contact with other civilizations has provided a new pattern of behaviour and new ideal of marital relationships to Muslims; (4) women have become aware of their rights and they want a status equal to men; and (5) the Quranic facts need to be reinterpreted in line with the present aspirations of the people.

On the other hand, there is a traditional school which does not want to interfere with the Quranic explanations. It stubbornly resists the reform. However, the educated opinion is surely in favour of the reorientation of Islamic beliefs and practices and the Quranic injunctions. The modernists have been trying to persuade the conservative, old-fashioned and illiterate Muslims that their social conservatism is against the spirit of the Quranic teaching.

### **3.4 The Christian Marriage**

Just as Hindus are stratified in various castes or Muslims are divided in two groups of Shias and Sunnis, similarly we find stratification among the Christians too. The two groups in which they are divided are Protestants and Catholics. The latter are further sub-divided as Latin Catholics and Syrian Catholics. Each group and sub-group is an endogamous group. Catholics do not marry with Protestants and Latin Catholics do not marry with Syrian Catholics. With this background of social stratification among the Christians, we may analyze the Christian marriage and compare it with Hindu and Muslim marriages.

One object of marriage is practically the same in all the three communities (Hindus, Muslims, and Christians), that is, getting social sanction of sex relations and procreation. But while amongst the Hindus, marriage is based on the religious sentiments, these have no great significance in Muslim marriage. In Christian marriage, religion has great significance. The Christians think that the institution of marriage has a central place in God's purpose for all human life. Sexual union among Christians is not considered to be a necessary evil nor is it regarded simply as a means of bringing children into the world. They believe that marriage takes place because of the will of God. After the marriage, man and woman submerge themselves in each other. The marriage creates not only the biological relations but also the mental and the religious relations between them. The three objects of Christian marriage are believed to be: procreation, escape from fornication (sex relations without marriage) and mutual help and comfort. On the basis of these objects, the Christian marriage is defined as "contract between a man and a woman normally intended to be binding for life for the purpose of sexual union, mutual companionship and the establishment of a family".

### Mate Selection and Marriage Rituals

The selection of marriage partners, like Hindus, is made in three ways: by parents, by boys and girls themselves, and by parents and children together. However, in nine out of every ten cases, selection is made and marriage is settled by the parents. While selecting a partner, the focus is on avoiding blood relations, social status of family, and the education, character, qualities, and the physical fitness of the selected mate. There is very little difference in Christian and Hindu marriages as regards the consanguinity and affinity restrictions are concerned. However, unlike the Muslims, there is no such thing as 'preferred persons' for marriage.

After the selection of the partner, betrothal ceremony is performed at the bride's house where the boy gives a ring to the girl. Occasionally, in exchange, the girl also gives a ring to the boy. After the engagement, the formalities to be fulfilled include: producing a certificate of church membership, a certificate of character and submitting an application for marriage in the church three weeks before the due date. The church priest then invites the objections against the marriage. The marriage day is fixed, if no objection is received in a specified period.

On the marriage day, the wedding takes place in the church of which the girl happens to be the member. The priest asks the groom and the bride whether they accept each other as wife and husband and when they give their consent, he solemnizes the marriage by asking the couple to declare in the presence of the witnesses that "I (A.B.), in the presence of the Almighty God and in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, do take thee (C.D.), to be my lawful wedded wife/husband".

### The Features

The Christians practise monogamy, while polygyny and polyandry are strictly prohibited. The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, amended in 1891, 1903, 1911, 1920, and 1928 covers all marriage aspects like who is to perform marriage, the place where it is to be performed (that is, church), the time at which it is to be performed (between 6: 0 a.m. and 7: 0 p.m.), the minimum age of the boy and the girl at the time of marriage, and the condition(s) under which it is to be performed (the marriage partners should not have a living spouse at the time of marriage).



Notes

The Christians practise divorce too, though the church does not appreciate it. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869 refers to the conditions under which the divorce may be obtained. It covers dissolution of marriage, declaring marriage null and void, decree of judicial separation, protection order and restitution of conjugal rights.





- Manu has said that a man can supersede his first wife after eight years of his first marriage, if his wife is barren; after ten years if children produced by his wife do not remain alive; after eleven years if his wife produces only daughters; and immediately after the first marriage if his wife is quarrel-some, rebellious, or harsh.
- Polyandry is marriage of one woman with many men, that is, it is a practice involving plurality of husbands. The only example of Drupadi's marriage with five Pandavas in the Mahabharata period was justified by Yudhishthira on three bases: he cited other examples in which similar marriages were performed; he cited examples of some of his ancestors who had practised polyandry; and he described it as "mother's command" and obeying mother's command was son's *dharma*.
- Hypergamy (*anuloma*) is a social practice according to which a boy from upper caste can marry a girl from lower caste and vice-versa. For example, Khatri (a caste) are divided into four hypergamous groups: Dhaighar Chargar, Baraghar, and Bawanjati.
- The *parental image* refers to the influence of a parent's image (father in the case of girls and mother in the case of boys) upon marital choice. The kind of individual whom a young boy/girl will love or hate, embrace or avoid is determined largely by the kind of people he/she has learned to love or hate as a child.
- It may be concluded that though a large majority of the youth would select their bride on the basis of her individual qualities and their own individual needs, but they would give an almost equal importance to the bride's membership of a particular group or family and to her adjustability to their family and its environment.
- Legislation must meet the social needs of the people; and because the social needs change, legislation also must change from time to time. The function of social legislation is to adjust the legal system continually to a society which is constantly outgrowing that system
- Muslim marriage, called *nikah*, unlike the sacramental marriage of the Hindus, is considered to be a civil contract. Its important objectives are: control over sex, procreation of children and perpetuation of family, upbringing of children, and ordering of domestic life.
- The Shia law gives the right to the guardian of a minor to contract his/her marriage. The marriage contracted by the *fazuli* relative of a minor gives the right to the minor to ratify the marriage on attaining puberty. The practice of ratification and option of repudiation is called *khairulbalig*.
- *Divorce (talaq)* in Muslim society can be given with or without the intervention of the court. A woman can divorce her husband only through the court but a man can divorce his wife without approaching the court and by making a single pronouncement during one *tuhr* (one menstruation period, i.e., one month) (called *Talaq-e-Ahasan*) or three pronouncements in three *tuhrs* (called *Talaq-e-Hasan*) or three pronouncements in a single *tuhr* (called *Talaq-e-Ulbidat*).
- The unilateral divorce and polygyny among Muslims is so much criticised that many people clamour for uniform civil code regarding marriage. The Muslims oppose it because they not only consider it interference in Muslim personal laws but also because the content of the UCC will be mainly drawn from the Hindu Act.
- The Christians practise divorce too, though the church does not appreciate it. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869 refers to the conditions under which the divorce may be obtained. It covers dissolution of marriage, declaring marriage null and void, decree of judicial separation, protection order and restitution of conjugal rights.

### 3.6 Key-Words

1. Exogamy : It is a social arrangement where marriage is allowed only outside of a social group.
2. Polygyny : It is a mating system involving one male and two or more females.

Notes

### 3.7 Review Questions

1. What is the concept of marriage?
2. Discuss the forms of marriage in India.
3. Write a short note on:
  - (i) the marriage among muslims.
  - (ii) the christian marriage.
4. What is Hypergamy?

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) (b)                      (ii) (c)                      (iii) (c)                      (iv) (b)                      (v) (b)

### 3.8 Further Readings



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
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## Unit 4: Family

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of family
- Discuss the forms of family.
- Assess the changing family patterns
- Know why decline of joint family.

### Introduction

In human context, a family (from Latin: familia) is a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, or co-residence. In most societies it is the principal institution for the socialization of children. Anthropologists most generally classify family organization as matrilocal (a mother and her children); conjugal (a wife, husband, and children, also called nuclear family); and consanguinal (also called an extended family) in which parents and children co-reside with other members of one parent's family.

There are also concepts of family that break with tradition within particular societies, or those that are transplanted via migration to flourish or else cease within their new societies. As a unit of socialization the family is the object of analysis for sociologists of the family. Genealogy is a field which aims to trace family lineages through history. In science, the term "family" has come to be used as a means to classify groups of objects as being closely and exclusively related. In the study of animals it has been found that many species form groups that have similarities to human "family" – often called "packs." Sexual relations among family members are regulated by rules concerning incest such as the incest taboo. Extended from the human "family unit" by affinity and consanguinity are concepts of family that are physical and metaphorical, or that grow increasingly inclusive extending to community, village, city, region, nationhood, global village and humanism.

One of the primary functions of the family is to produce and reproduce persons, biologically and/or socially. This can occur through the sharing of material substances (such as semen, and food); the giving and receiving of care and nurture (nurture kinship); jural ties of rights and obligations; and moral and sentimental ties. Thus, one's experience of one's family shifts over time. From the perspective of children, the family is a "family of orientation": the family serves to locate children socially and plays a major role in their enculturation and socialization. From the point of view of the parent(s), the

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family is a “family of procreation,” the goal of which is to produce and enculturate and socialize children. However, producing children is not the only function of the family; in societies with a sexual division of labor, marriage, and the resulting relationship between two people, it is necessary for the formation of an economically productive household.

A “conjugal” family includes only the husband, the wife, and unmarried children who are not of age. The most common form of this family is regularly referred to in sociology as a nuclear family. A “consanguineal” family consists of a parent and his or her children, and other people. Although the concept of consanguinity originally referred to relations by “blood,” cultural anthropologists have argued that one must understand the idea of “blood” metaphorically and that many societies understand family through other concepts rather than through genetic distance. A “matrilocal” family consists of a mother and her children. Generally, these children are her biological offspring, although adoption of children is a practice in nearly every society. This kind of family is common where women have the resources to rear their children by themselves, or where men are more mobile than women.

### 4.1 Perspectives in Studying Family

Three approaches – functionalist, structuralist and interactionist – have mainly been used in evaluating family. In the *functionalist* approach, family is regarded as a sub-system or as a part in relation to society as a whole. Functionalists examine family in terms of: (a) set of functions it performs and its contribution to the maintenance of the total social system, (b) functional relationships between the family and other parts of social system, and (c) functions of family for its individual members. In the *structuralist* approach, family is seen in terms of a pattern of inter-related statuses and roles at a particular time and as an organized pattern of interrelated rights and obligations of its members. In the *interactionist* approach, family is concerned with interaction between individual members. The interactionist perspective, assuming that action is meaningful to those involved, seeks to understand the meanings which family members give to their activities. The interactionists are, thus, concerned with the definition of situations in family and the analysis of the way a family member interprets the language, gestures and manners of other members which affects his behaviour and his interaction with others. The interactionists are also concerned with the techniques of tension management related to solidarity in family, that is, with personal and marital adjustment in the family. The functionalist approach assumes a universality of certain functions of family and around specific functions, it conceptualizes roles also. It further explains the relationship among family roles and considers the change in family functions or family roles mainly due to change in society or in norms and values. The structuralist approach assumes a universality of family statuses (like parent, grandparent, uncle, etc.) in all societies and believes that variations in the roles of individual family members are associated with these statuses. For example, in some societies, the grandfather or the eldest male member may be entrusted with all of the property and personal rights of the members of the family (as in patriarchal joint family in North India) while in other societies, the grandfather may have little or no authority. The interactionist approach is concerned with the diversity of both structures and roles in family life. Interactionists are interested primarily in studying the way in which these variations affect the relations between members of the family group. The focus of the interactionist sociologist is on the extent to which husband and wife, parents and children, and parents-in-law and daughters-in-law, etc. have developed in contemporary families a *modus operandi* to maintain unity within the family. In describing the *modus operandi*, they attempt to discover which aspects of interaction are important in personal adjustment (for example, joint decision-making and the necessity of giving importance to each other’s values and aspirations). It may, thus, be maintained that the functionalists analyze liaisons with other groups and institutions, the structuralists focus on tradition maintenance for sustaining existing norms and values, and the interactionists assess the sustaining of solidarity among members.

Our approach to the analysis of Indian family here is both structuralist and interactionist. The assessment is based mainly on the empirical studies of sociologists like I.P. Desai, K.M. Kapadia,



Aileen Ross, M.S. Gore, A.M. Shah, Sachchidananda, etc. Iravati Karve's historical approach has been referred to for the understanding of the traditional structure and organization of Hindu family. But before analyzing the Hindu or Indian family, we will take up the general concept of family as it is universally understood and its typologies.

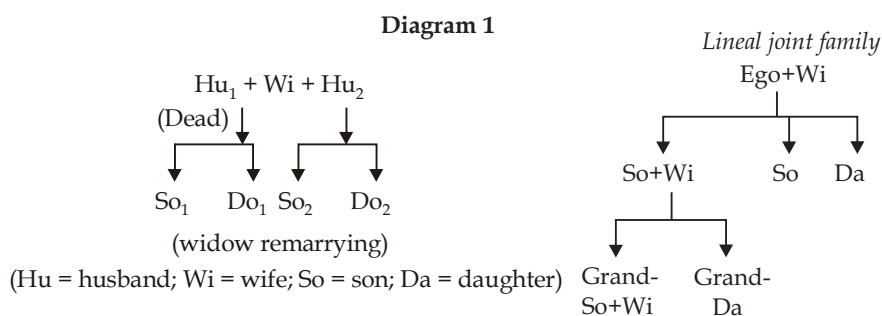
## 4.2 Concept of Family

As a reproductive or a biological unit, a family is composed of a man and a woman having a socially approved sexual relationship and whatever offspring they might have. As a social unit, a family is defined as a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household or a sub-household. Gerald Leslie (1982: 12) has defined it as a group of two adults of opposite sex, living in a socially approved sex relationship, and their own or adopted children. Murdock (1949) defines family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic co-operation, and reproduction. Ross's definition of family includes physical, social and psychological elements of family life. According to her (1961: 31), family is a group of people usually related as some particular type of kindred, who may live in one household, and whose unity resides in a patterning of rights and duties, sentiments and authority. She, thus, makes distinction between four sub-structures of family: (i) ecological sub-structure, that is, spatial arrangement of family members and their households, or how relatives live geographically close to each other. In simple words, this refers to the size of the household and type of the family; (ii) sub-structure of rights and duties, that is, division of labour within the household; (iii) sub-structure of power and authority, that is, control over the actions of others; and (iv) sub-structure of sentiments, that is, relationship between different sets of members; for example, between parents and children, husband and wife, siblings and siblings, etc.

## 4.3 Forms of Family

Chattopadhyay (1961: 75) has given three types of family: simple, compound, and composite. Simple family consists of a man, his wife and unmarried children. Sometimes it happens that one partner dies after the birth of some children and the other remarries. In that case, the unit consisting of two sets of children cannot any longer be termed 'simple'. The Diagram 1 (i and ii) represents such two units.

In both units, we have two simple families. This type of family is termed by Chattopadhyay as *compound* family. It differs from the 'simple' family in the sense that there are two sets of children – one from the deceased partner and other from the newly married living partner; but one parent is common in the two sets. Sometimes one partner remarries even when the other partner is alive, that is, either a man has two wives or a woman has two husbands. In such cases also, two simple families are involved in each case. The term used for such a family by Chattopadhyay is also *compound* family. He describes family with a man and his two wives and two sets of children from each wife as *compound polygynous family*, while a family with a woman and her two husbands and two sets of children from each husband as *compound polyandrous family*.



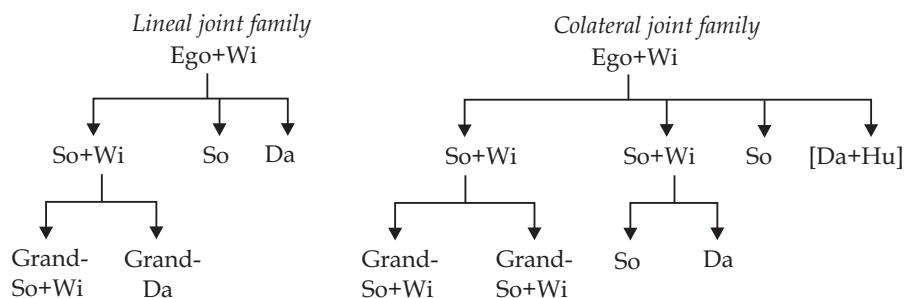
While nuclear families combined through plural marriage are called *polygamous* families, those combined through the parent-child relation are called *joint/extended* families. The extension may be

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vertical or horizontal. In the joint family, the lineally related nuclear families live together and function under one common authority. Thus, a joint family is “a single homestead occupied by two or more lineally related males, their spouses and offspring subject to the same authority”.

A joint family may be of several types: (i) a man and his wife, their unmarried sons and daughters, and their married sons with (unmarried) children; (ii) a man, his wife and unmarried children, and his parents; (iii) a man, his wife, his parents, his unmarried children and married sons with children; (iv) several brothers each with his wife and children; and (v) several brothers each with his wife and children and the parents.

Diagram 2



(Note: Enclosure in the box bracket indicates residence elsewhere.)

On this basis, it may be said that the joint family may be either *lineal* (where the extension is vertical) or *colateral* (where the extension is horizontal).

On the basis of holding of authority, the families are classified as *husband-dominant*, *wife-dominant*, and *equalitarian* families. That equalitarian family where husband and wife make most of the decisions jointly is called *syncratic* family and the one in which equal number of separate decisions are assigned to both partners is called *autonomic* family.

Burgess and Locke (1963: 26) have classified families as *institutional* and *companionship* on the basis of the behaviour of the individuals. In the institutional family, the behaviour of the members is controlled by mores and public opinion, while in the companionship family, behaviour arises from the mutual affection and consensus of its members. Burgess holds that American family has changed from institutional type to companionship type.

On the basis of the kinship ties, the families have been classified as *conjugal* and *consanguine*. In the former, the priority is given to marital ties and in the latter to blood ties. The American independent nuclear family system is described as a conjugal one, while in contrast, the Indian family system emphasizes on filial, fraternal and sibling relations over marital relations. In a conjugal system, a man may leave his parents and “cleave into his wife”, but in a consanguine system, the wife is an outsider whose wishes and needs must be subordinated to the continuity and welfare of the joint/extended kin group. The conjugal families are transitory in character and disintegrate with the death of the parents. The consanguine families, on the other hand, continue for a very long time because the existence of the family does not depend upon any couple. Even if the father or mother die prematurely, there are other kin present to absorb the several facets of the parental role. After the death of grandparents, control of the family passes on to the next generation.

Zimmerman (1947: 120) has classified families as trustee, domestic and atomistic. However, he has stated that these are ideal family types rather than empirical family types. The *trustee* family has the right and power to make the family members conform to its wishes as this family has no concept of individual rights. The authority of the family head is not absolute but it is delegated to him in his role as trustee for carrying out family responsibilities. The *domestic* family is an intermediate type between trustee and atomistic families, having characteristics of both the families. It maintains a balance between formalism and individualism. The *atomistic* family is one in which the conventional mores lose their

significance and each member has to make his own choice. The authority of the family over its members is minimum. Zimmerman's contention is that American family has changed from trustee to atomistic type. Is Indian family following the same pattern as claimed by Burgess and Zimmerman?

### 4.3.1 Traditional (Joint) Family in India

The concept of 'jointness' in the term 'joint family' has varied with different scholars. When some scholars (like Iravati Karve) regard 'co-residentiality' as important in jointness, others (B.S. Cohn, S.C. Dube, Harold Gould, Pauline Kolenda, and Ramkrishna Mukherjee) regard co-residentiality and commensality as essential ingredients of jointness; yet others (F.G., Bailey, T.N. Madan) give importance to joint ownership of property or co-parcenary, irrespective of type of residence and commensality; and a few (like LP. Desai) give importance to fulfilment of obligations towards kin, even if residence is separate and there is no common ownership of property. 'Fulfilment of obligations' refers to identifying oneself as member of a particular family, rendering financial and other kinds of help, and following joint family norms.

According to Iravati Karve (1953: 21), the ancient family in India (in the Vedic and Epic periods) was joint in terms of residence, property and functions. She terms this family as *traditional family* or *joint family*. Kapadia (1966: 220), however, maintains that our early family was not joint or patriarchal alone. Side by side with the patriarchal families, we had individual families too.

But in spite of this trend towards individualism, the family was maintained as joint and agnatic. Karve has given five characteristics of traditional (joint) family: common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship, and some kinship relationship. Thus, her criteria of jointness are: size, residence, property, and income. On this basis, she defines joint family (1953: 10) as "a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common, who participate in common family worship, and who are related to each other as some particular type of kindred".

Thus, a man with his wife, two sons, two daughters, two grandsons and two grand-daughters shall have to divide his property in five shares to be equally distributed amongst his wife and four children. The grandchildren will share their parent's property. The heirs in the branch of each pre-deceased son or daughter shall take between them one share.

Desai (1956: 148), however, feels that we cannot place undue emphasis on co-residence and a common kitchen as dimensions of jointness, because doing so would be failing to recognize the joint family as a set of social relationships and a functioning unit. According to him, it is the relationship between the members of a household among themselves and with those of another household that determines the type of the family of that household. What distinguishes nuclear family from joint family is the difference in the role relations and the normative pattern of behaviour among different relatives. He thinks that when two families having kinship relationship are living separately but function under one authority, it will be a joint family. He calls it *functional joint family*. In residential joint family, he says that unless we have three or more generations living together, it will not be a traditional type of joint family. According to him, two-generation families will constitute *marginal joint family*. He, thus, takes three criteria for explaining joint family: generation depth, rights and obligations, and property.



Notes

The word 'common' or 'joint property' here, according to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, means that all the living male and female members upto three generations have a share in the paternal property and without the co-parcener's consent, the property cannot be sold or disposed off.

Notes

Rama Krishna Mukherjee (1962: 352-98) while giving five types of relations—conjugal, parental-filial, inter-sibling, lineal, and affinal— has maintained that a joint family is one which consists of one or more of the first three types of relations and either lineal and/or affinal relations among the members.

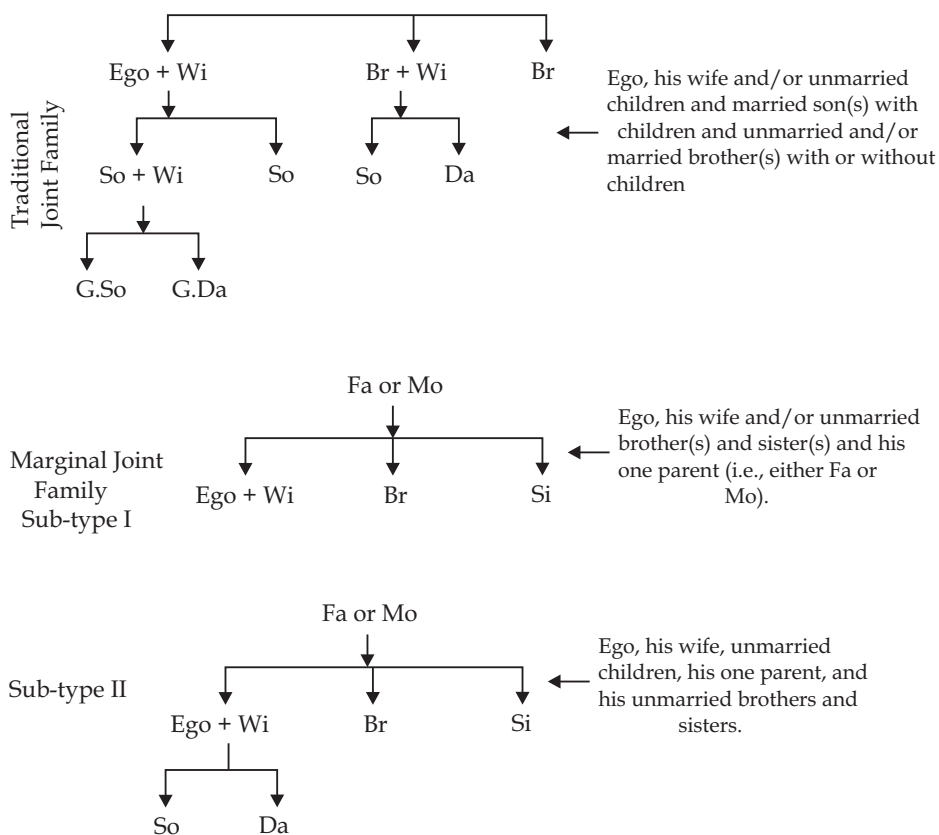
4.3.2 Nature of Traditional Family

Desai (1964: 153-156), on the basis of his survey of 423 families conducted between 1956 and 1958, has given two different classifications of families: (i) in terms of the relationship among members measured by its generation depth, and (ii) on the basis of their relationship with other households. On the first basis, he has further classified families into four types: one generation, two generations, three generations, and four or more generations families. The first two types of families are described by him as nuclear families and the last two as joint families.

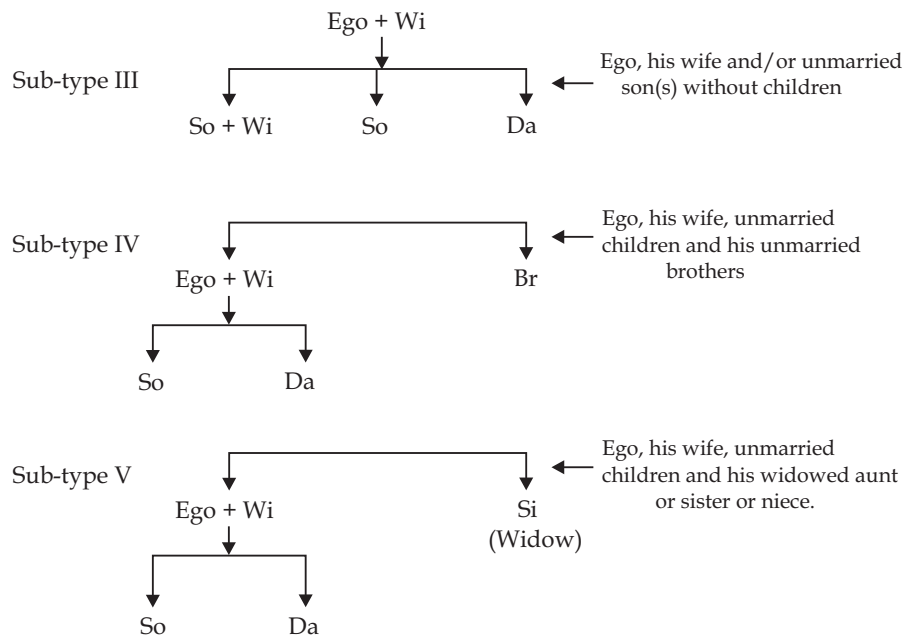
In terms of relationship with other households and the degree of jointness, Desai (*Ibid*: 157-61) has classified families into five types:

(i) nuclear family (which is separate in terms of residence and functioning), (ii) functionally joint family (which is residentially nuclear but joint with other households by way of fulfilment of mutual obligations), (iii) functionally and substantively joint family (which is residentially nuclear but joint in terms of property, functioning and fulfilling mutual obligations), (iv) marginally joint family (which is joint in residence, property and functions but consists of two generations only, and (v) traditional joint family (which, like the marginal joint family, is joint in residence, property and functions but consists of three or more generations). Diagrammatically, the sub-types of marginal joint and the traditional joint families, may be shown as in Diagram 3.

Diagram 3



Notes



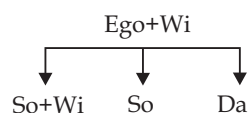
The third sub-type of marginal joint family in Desai’s classification (that is, a man, his wife, unmarried children, and his married sons without issues) is considered as nuclear family by Kapadia (1959: 74). He maintains that the family is nuclear if it is composed of a person, his wife and their children, married or unmarried, that is, it is a group of parents and their children, married or unmarried, provided the married children have no children of their own. In the latter case (that is, when the children have the children of their own), it will turn itself into a joint family. Kapadia gives five types of families: (1) nuclear family with unmarried sons; (2) nuclear family with married sons; (3) lineal joint family; (4) colateral joint family; and (5) family with widowed sister and/or her children, that is, with a dependent.

The second type of nuclear family in Kapadia’s above classification (which is described as marginal joint family by Desai) is considered a small joint family by Aileen Ross. Ross (1961: 34) has given four types of families: (1) large joint family, that is, family composed of three or more generations living together in the same house, cooking in the same kitchen, owning property in common, and pooling their incomes for common spending; (2) small joint family, that is, family consisting of parents, married sons and unmarried children, or two brothers living together with their wives and children; (3) nuclear family, that is, family with one or both parents and their unmarried children; and (4) nuclear family with dependents, that is, parents, their unmarried children and one or more dependents.

The small joint family has been classified by Ross in three sub-types as under:

- (i) A man, his wife, unmarried children and married son (s) without children.

Diagram 4 (i)

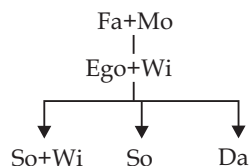




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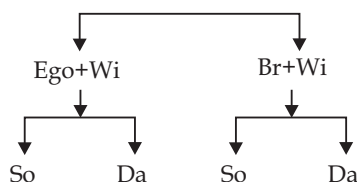
(ii) A man, his wife, his parents, his unmarried children and his married sons without children.

Diagram 4 (ii)



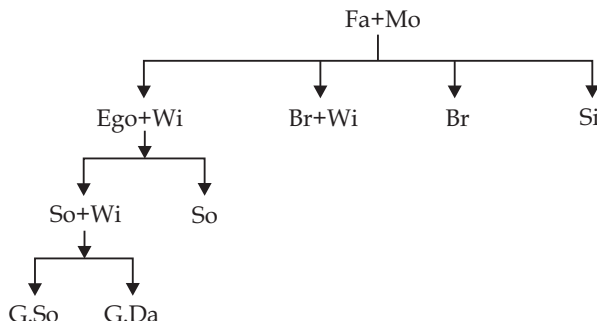
(iii) Two married brothers with their wives and children.

Diagram 4 (iii)



The large joint family, according to Ross, consists of a man, his wife, parents, unmarried children, married children with or without their offsprings, and his brothers (married and unmarried).

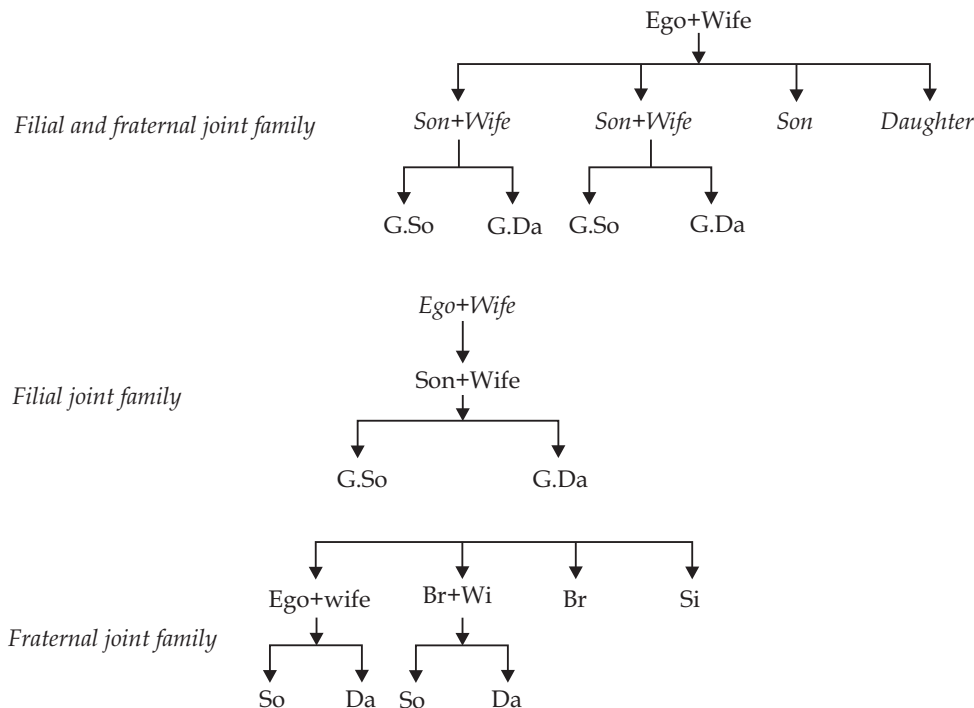
Diagram 5



All these classifications show that there is no unanimity amongst the scholars in the concept of joint family. Taking the concepts of all these scholars together, it may be said that “a joint family is a multiplicity of geneologically related nuclear families, joint in residence and commensal relations and functioning under one authority”. It has also been defined as “two or more co-resident and commensal kinship units”. M.S. Gore, however, feels that a more correct approach to explaining joint family should be to view it as a family of male co-parceners and their dependents, instead of viewing it as a multiplicity of nuclear families, because in the latter approach, the emphasis is on conjugal relationship whereas in joint family, the emphasis should be on filial and fraternal relationships, as we find in the former approach.

According to Gore (*Ibid*: 4) as an ideal type, the joint family consists of a man and his wife, their adult sons, their wives and children, and younger children of the parental couple. This type of family may be described as *fraternal and filial joint family*. This family may have two variations: one, as filial joint family only, and other as fraternal joint family only. These three types may be diagrammatically shown as follows:

Diagram 6



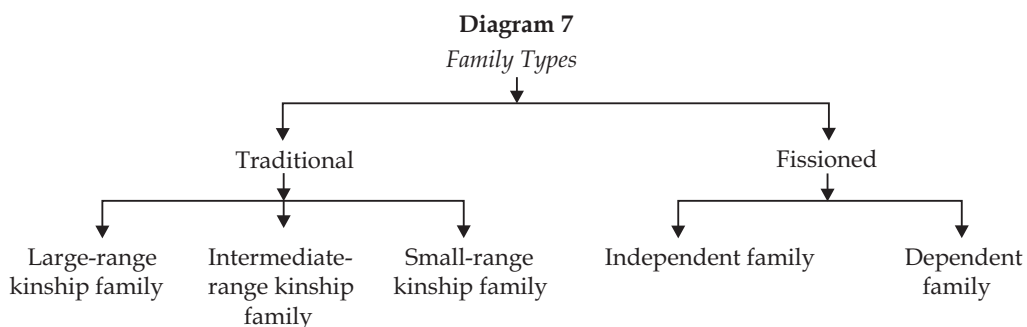
Gore (*Ibid*: 94) identifies two basic types of families – nuclear and joint – each having three sub-types. The sub-types of a nuclear family are: (i) husband, wife and unmarried children; (ii) husband, wife, children and unmarried (and unearaing) brothers; and (iii) husband, wife, children and widowed mother as dependent or other dependents who are not co-parceners. The sub-types of a joint family are: (i) husband, wife, unmarried and married children (lineal joint family); (ii) husband, wife, unmarried and married children and unmarried brothers (fraternal joint family); and (iii) husband, wife, married sons, married brothers and their families (lineal and fraternal joint family).

My contention is that the structural ideal of the Indian family is entirely different from the western family. Since early family in India was one what is called 'joint family' today, we should consider this family as our basic family unit and should term it as a 'traditional' family while the so-called 'nuclear' family should be termed as a 'fissioned' family, that is, one which has separated from its parental unit. After the residential separation, it may continue to be dependent on its parental unit or may function as a completely independent unit. The term 'joint' would be appropriate only when we take 'nuclear' family as our basic family unit and the joining together of two such nuclear units gives us a new pattern of family. But knowing that 'nuclear' family was not our basic unit, it is necessary that we take 'traditional' family as basic family unit and understand other forms in this context.

The normal custom in Indian society is that a young man and his wife begin their married life not in an independent household but with the husband's parents. Contrary to this, in western society, even if a man and his wife begin their married life under the same roof with his or her parents, as sometimes happens because of the housing shortage, they will consider such an arrangement to be an emergency measure and, therefore, temporary. As soon as it is possible, they will set up an independent household of their own. If for some reason they are unable to do so and if in the ensuing months there are some marital difficulties, the first thing that they would do would be to move out from under the parental roof. Because of this structural ideal, the basis of classifying our families should neither be the number of persons composing the household (as done by Bowman) nor the orientation of actions of the individual members (as done by Desai), but residence, dependence and range of kinship relationship taken together. On this basis, we may classify families in two groups: 'traditional' and 'fissioned'.

Notes

The former may further be sub-classified as large-range kinship family, inter-mediate-range kinship family, and small-range kinship family; and the latter may be sub-classified as dependent family and independent family.



The *fissioned independent family*, consisting of husband, wife and their unmarried children, is one where the head of the family (of procreation) is neither subject to the authority of any of his relatives nor economically dependent upon them; and the *fissioned dependent family* is one where the members (husband, wife and unmarried sons and daughters) live in a separate house but remain dependent on their kin, either in terms of functioning or in terms of property. This unit is also under the authority of a common living patriarch.

In traditional families, the *large-range kinship family* comprises four types of kin: primary, secondary, tertiary, and distant. It may also be described as family consisting of families of procreation of at least siblings in each of at least two adjacent generations (say A and B in Generation II and C and F in Generation III in Diagram 8 (i) with one or both parents as H/W in Diagram 9). An example of this family would be a family consisting of two married brothers (A and B in Diagram 8 (i) with their parents(s) (H/W), wives, married sons (C and F) and unmarried sons (D and G) and daughters (E and K) and unmarried grandsons (M and O) and granddaughters (N and P).

In Diagram 8 (i), the four types of kin (primary, secondary, tertiary, and distant) involved are:

**Primary:** Hu/Wi/Fa/Mo/Br/Si/So/Da

**Secondary:** FaFa/FaBr/BrSo/SoSo/BrWi/SoDa/FaSi

**Tertiary:** FaFaFa/FaFaBr/FaBrSo/BrSoSo/SoSoSo

**Distant:** FaFaBrSo/FaFaBrSoSo

The *intermediate-range kinship family* consists of three types of kin: primary, secondary, and tertiary. It may also be described as family consisting of families of procreation of one individual in the senior generation (say H in Generation I in Diagram 8 (ii)) and at least one individual in the lower generation (say A in Generation II). For example, ego (H) with his wife (W) and unmarried son (C) and daughter (D) and married sons (A and B) with their wives and offsprings (E and F).

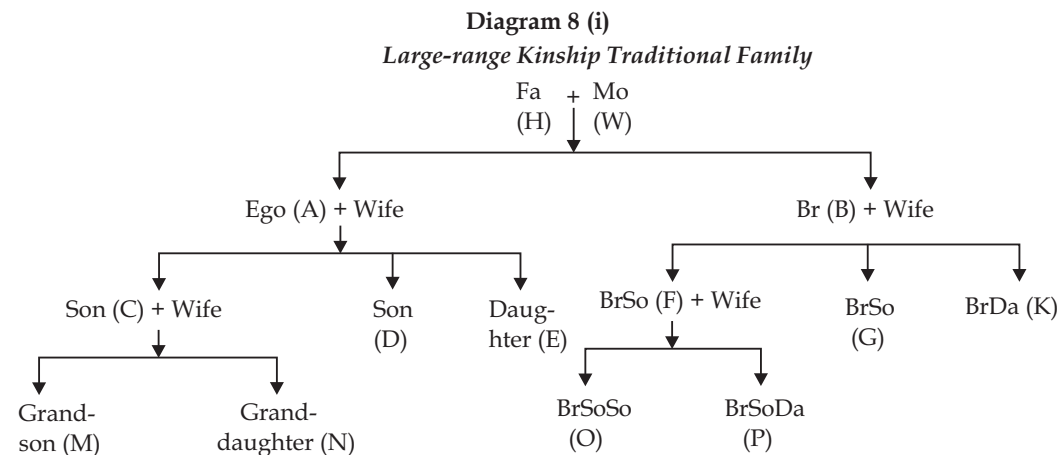
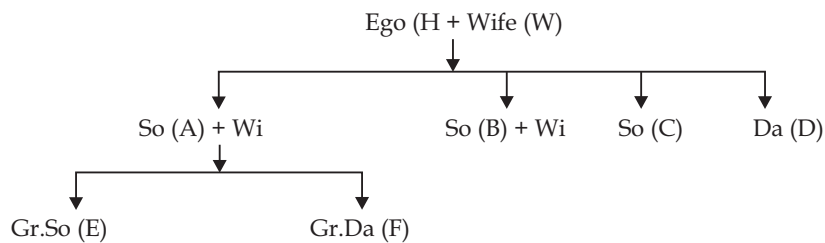


Diagram 8 (ii)

*Intermediate-range Kinship Traditional Family*

In the Diagram 8 (ii), the three types of kin (primary, secondary and tertiary) involved are:

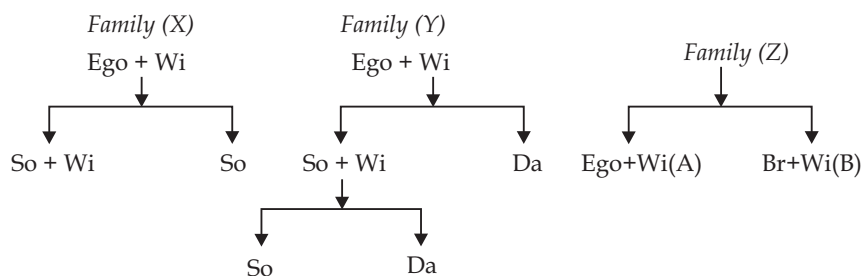
**Primary:** Hu/Wi/So/Da/Fa/Mo/Br/Si

**Secondary:** FaFa/FaMo/FaBr/FaSi

**Tertiary:** HuBrWi/FaBrWi

The *small-range kinship family* consists of only two types of kin – primary and secondary. It may also be described as family of only two related families of procreation of the same generation (as family 'Z') or adjacent generations (family 'Y'). For example, two married brothers (say family 'Z' of two brothers A and B in Diagram 8 (iii)) (without their parents and without children; or ego with his wife, unmarried son and married son with his offspring (for example, family 'Y' in Diagram 8 (iii)).

Diagram 8 (iii)

*Small-range Kinship Traditional Family*

In the Diagram 8 (iii), the two types of kin (primary and secondary) involved are:

**Primary:** Hu/Wi/So/Da/Fa/Mo/Br/Si

**Secondary:** BrSo/BrDa/BrWi/FaFa/FaMo/FaBr/SoSo/SoDa

Thus, in our classification of families, generation depth is not at all important. Even a family of one generation or two generations can be a joint family (as small-range kinship family 'Z' and family 'X' in Diagram 8 (iii)).

### 4.3.3 Characteristics of Traditional Family

The traditional (joint) family has several characteristics as described below:

- (1) **It has an authoritarian structure:** Authoritarianism here means that the power to make decisions and pass judgements is in the hands of one person who demands immediate obedience. While in a democratic family, the authority is vested in one or more individuals on the basis of competence and ability, in an authoritarian family, the power is traditionally given only to the eldest male of the family because of his age and seniority. The head allows little individual freedom to other family members and may or may not consult them in decision-making. But in a democratic family, it is obligatory on the part of the head to consult other members and give due weightage to their opinions before making any decisions.

Notes

- (2) **It has familistic organization:** This refers to the subordination of individual's interests to the interests of the family as a whole, which means that the goals of the family must be the goals of the individual members. If a child wants to continue his higher education after graduation but is asked to sit on the family shop for looking after the family business, he has to subordinate his interest to the family's interest.
- (3) **Status of members is determined by their age and relationship:** The status of a man is higher than his wife; in two generations, the status of a person in the higher generation is higher than the status of a person in the lower generation; in the same generation, the status of a person of higher age is higher than the status of a person of lower age; and the status of a woman is determined by the status of her husband in the family.
- (4) **The filial and fraternal relationship gets preference over conjugal relationship:** In other words, husband-wife relationship is subordinated to father-son or brother-brother relationship.
- (5) **The family functions on the ideal of joint responsibility:** If a father takes loan to marry his daughter, it is also the responsibility of his sons to repay the loan.
- (6) **All members get equal attention:** If a son of one brother earning more than Rs. 4,000 a month is admitted in an expensive convent school, a son of another brother earning hardly Rs. 1,500 a month will also have the same facility to get education in such a costly school. This is based on the idea of pooling of income for running the household.
- (7) **The authority in the family (between men and women, men and men, and women and women) is determined on the principle of seniority:** Though the eldest male (or female) may delegate the authority to someone else but even this delegation is based on the principle of seniority, which limits the scope for the development of individualism.

#### 4.4 Changing Family Pattern

Let us now examine how is traditional (joint) family changing in our society. Is it disintegrating?

##### **Nature of Change**

My contention is that 'jointness' of family (that is, co-resident and commensal kin group) is not disappearing and that stage can never be envisaged in India when the joint family will be lost in the mental horizon of people; only the 'cutting off point of 'jointness' is changing. Instead of large joint families, we will have only locally functioning effective small joint families of two generations or so. At the same time, even the majority of those nuclear families in which a man, his wife and unmarried children live separately, will continue to be 'joint' with their primary kin like father or brother in terms of 'functioning'.

##### **Empirical Studies on Change**

What do various empirical studies point out in this connection? The broad conclusion is that the old-style family in the sense of numerous families living together is much rarer now than is commonly supposed. The Census Commissioner of 1951 observed that a large proportion of small households (33% in villages and 38% in towns) is a *prima facie* indication that families do not continue to be 'joint' according to the traditional custom of the country and the habit of breaking away from the joint family and setting up separate households in quite strong. Several sociological studies made in different parts of the country between 1950s and 1980s also indicated that the old-style joint family is rare and the nature of jointness is changing from that of 'residence' to one of 'fulfilling obligations'. We will attempt to analyze these changes in Indian family in two areas, namely, change in structure, and change in interpersonal relations.

##### **Change in Structure**

Of the studies conducted by a few scholars for analyzing the changing structure of family in India, we will discuss here only the outstanding surveys of scholars like I.P. Desai, K.M. Kapadia, Aileen Ross, M.S. Gore, A.M. Shah and Sachchidananda.



Desai (1964: 41) had studied 423 families in 1955-57 in Mahuwa town in Gujarat with a population of about 25,000 persons and 4,800 households. Of the total population, 78 per cent were Hindus and 22 per cent were Muslims. Classifying 423 families in his sample on the basis of the generation depth, he found that 4.02 per cent families were one-generation nuclear families, 57.45 per cent were two-generation nuclear families, 32.86 per cent were three-generation joint families, and 5.67 per cent were four or more generation joint families. In other words, 61.47 per cent families were nuclear and 38.53 per cent were joint, showing thereby that nuclearity prevails more than jointness.

Classifying 423 families on the basis of relationship with other households, that is, in terms of the degree of jointness, Desai (*Ibid*: 69) found that about half of the families were joint with others in terms of residence, property and functioning, and about one-third were joint with others only in terms of functioning. In 4.96 per cent cases, he found zero degree of jointness; in 26.48 per cent cases, low jointness (that is, jointness in mutual obligations only); in 17.02 per cent cases, high jointness (that is, jointness in mutual obligations and property); in 30.26 per cent cases higher jointness (that is, marginal jointness, or jointness in residence (less than three generations), mutual obligations, and property); and in 21.28 per cent cases, highest jointness (that is, traditional jointness, or jointness in residence (involving three or more generations), mutual obligations, and property).

Thus, Desai (1956: 154-56) gave three conclusions pertaining to the change in the urban family: (1) Nuclearity is increasing and jointness is decreasing, and the husband-wife-children group is predominant in the residential and compositional pattern of the families. (2) Spirit of individualism is not growing, as of the households that are residentially and compositionally nuclear, little less than 50 per cent are actively joint with other households in the same town or outside it. (3) The radius of kinship relations within the circle of jointness is becoming smaller. The relations between parents and sons, brothers and brothers, and uncles and nephews predominated in joint families. In other words, the lineal depth of relationship is found between father, son, and grandson, and the collateral relationships are between a man and his father's brother and his own brothers.

Kapadia's study (1956: 112), conducted in 1955-56, gave comparative change of urban and rural families (unlike Desai's study which painted the pattern of change only in urban family). He had studied one town—Navsari—and its fifteen surrounding villages in Surat district in Gujarat. In all, he studied 1,345 families of which 18 per cent were from Navsari town and 82 per cent were from its surrounding villages.


Analyzing the structure of family by taking the urban and the rural areas together, Kapadia (*Ibid*: 113-15) found that 49.1 per cent families were nuclear and 50.9 per cent were joint. The conclusions about the family patterns were delineated by Kapadia as follows:

1. In the rural community, firstly, the proportion of joint families (49.7%) is almost the same as that of nuclear families (50.3%). Secondly, when the nature of the family pattern is viewed in relation to castes, higher castes (e.g., Patidars, Brahmins, and Banias) have predominantly joint family, its proportion to the nuclear family being nearly 5: 3. The lower castes show a greater incidence of nuclear family, the proportion of the joint family to the nuclear being 9: 11. Thus, while among the higher castes, there is 0.6 nuclear family per one joint family; among the lower castes, every joint family has its counterpart 1.2 nuclear families. Thirdly, the joint family is predominant not only among the agricultural castes (for example, Patidars and Anavils) but also among the functional castes (that is, carpenter, tailor, gold-smith, black-smith, grocer, potter, oil-presser, bangle-seller, etc.) which shows that it is doubtful whether the joint family is now necessarily a concomitant of the agricultural economy.
2. This is against the general presumption that people in cities and big towns live in nuclear families and that towns and cities have disintegrative influences on the structure of the family.
3. In the 'impact' villages (that is, villages within the radius of 7 to 8 km from the town), the family pattern closely resembles the rural pattern and has no correspondence with the town pattern (that is, the proportion of joint families is almost the same as that of nuclear families). Secondly, as far the pattern showing the caste variations is concerned, unlike other villages, in 'impact' villages, the functional castes show a gradual increase of nuclear families and agricultural castes (Patidars, etc.) show a gradual decrease of nuclear families. It is difficult to say whether this is due to the impact of the town or is merely an expression of caste variations.

Notes

In the light of the above data, Kapadia gave two important conclusions: (1) joint family structure is not being nuclearized, and (2) the difference in the rural and the urban family patterns is the result of modification of the caste pattern by economic factors.

Aileen Ross (1961: 303) studied the pattern of change in middle and upper class families in an urban area. She studied 157 families in Bangalore in 1957. Her interviewees were asked to describe the composition of their households at two periods of time: first, when they were 'growing up' (that is, in their childhood) and second, at the time of 'the interview'. The answers revealed that at the time of 'growing up', 12.1 per cent families were large joint (that is, with three or more generations with lineal and/or colateral kin), 28.0 per cent were small joint (that is, either a man, his wife, unmarried children and married sons without off-spring, or a man, his wife, parents, unmarried children and married sons without offspring, or two married brothers with their wives and unmarried children), 49.1 per cent were nuclear, and 10.8 per cent were nuclear with dependents. At the time of interview, the structure of the respondents' households was found to be large joint in 5.1 per cent cases, small joint in 30.6 per cent cases, nuclear in 43.3 per cent cases, and nuclear with dependents in 21.0 per cent cases (*Ibid*: 36-37).



*Did u know?* In the urban community, there are more joint families (56.5%) than nuclear families (43.5%), the proportion being 0.77 nuclear family for every one joint family.

On the basis of these figures, Ross (*Ibid*: 49) concluded that: (1) the trend of family form in India today is towards a break away from the traditional joint family form into nuclear family units; (2) the small joint family is now the most typical form of family life; (3) a growing number of people now spend at least part of their lives in single family units; (4) living in several types of family during a life-time seems so widespread that it is possible to talk of a cycle of family types as being the normal sequence for city-dwellers; (5) distant relatives are less important to the present generation than they were to their parents and grandparents. They tend to see them less often and have less affection and feelings of responsibility for them; and (6) the city-dweller son has become more spatially separated from all relatives (due to small accommodation in the house and the changing attitudes towards individuality and privacy which make visitors less welcome than in the large joint family), and consequently less under their influence and control than in the tightly spatially bound joint family.

A.M. Shah studied 283 households in one village (called Radhvanaj) in Gujarat in between 1955 and 1958. This village is situated at a distance of about 35 km from Ahmedabad and had 283 households and a total population of 1,185 persons belonging to twenty-one castes at the time of study. Of the total households, 34.3 per cent were small households (with three or less members), 47.0 per cent were medium-sized households (with four to six members), 15.5 per cent were large households (with seven to nine members), and 3.2 per cent were very large households (with ten or more members).

In terms of the composition, Shah classified the households into two groups: 'simple' and 'complex'. *Simple* households were defined as those which consisted of whole or part of the parental family, while *complex* households were defined as those which consisted of two or more parental or part of the parental families. The *parental family* was defined as one consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried children. Shah maintained that a simple household had six possible compositions: (i) a man and his wife, (ii) either only a man or only his wife, (iii) a man, his wife and his unmarried children, (iv) unmarried brothers and sisters, (v) a father and his unmarried children, and (vi) a mother and her unmarried children. Likewise, a complex household had three possible compositions: (i) two or more parental families, (ii) one parental family plus part of a parental family, and (iii) part of one parental family plus part of one other parental family.

On the basis of this classification, Shah found that 68.0 per cent households in the village were simple households and 32.0 per cent were complex households. Since 'simple' household in Shah's analysis represented a nuclear family and 'complex' household represented a joint family, it could be maintained that Shah's study also revealed the breakdown of joint family system in rural India.

Rama Krishna Mukherjee (1975: 4) studied 4,120 families in West Bengal in 1960-61 and concluded that joint family structures are being nuclearized in course of time and that replacement of joint family by nuclear family is *fait accompli*.

M.S. Gore (1968: 247-48) studied 499 Agarwal families (399 in the main sample and 100 in the additional sample) in 1960 living in or coming from Haryana region. The families in the main sample were engaged in traditional occupation of business, trade and money-lending and had comparatively less formal education. These families were selected from three different sectors – urban, fringe and rural. The urban families were selected from Delhi, the fringe families from the surrounding villages of Delhi, and the rural families from Rohtak and Hissar districts of Haryana. The families in the additional sample included those which were engaged in non-traditional occupation, were comparatively more educated, and living in an urban area. From each of these four types of families (urban, rural, fringe, and additional group), Gore selected both nuclear and joint families. The urban families were further classified as 'local' (in which head of the family was born in Delhi) and 'immigrant' families (in which head of the family was born outside Delhi). The break-up of the 499 families in all these types was: urban local nuclear and joint families: 50; urban immigrant nuclear and joint families: 149; fringe nuclear: 49; fringe joint: 51; rural nuclear: 48; rural joint: 52; and additional nuclear and joint: 100. Thus, the total number of nuclear and joint families studied in the main sample was 195 and 204 respectively. From each family, Gore selected two or more respondents for interview. In this way, he studied 1,274 persons in all – 1,174 in the main sample and 100 in the additional sample. Of these, 490 respondents were from the nuclear families (422 in the main sample and 68 in the additional sample) and 784 were from the joint families (752 in the main and 32 in additional sample).

Classifying 399 families in the main sample on the basis of six classifications, Gore (*Ibid*: 94-96) found 154 nuclear families of type I (that is, a man, his wife and unmarried children), 41 nuclear families of type II and III (that is, either a man, his wife, unmarried children and unmarried brothers or a man, his wife, unmarried children and some dependent who is not a coparcener), 137 joint families of type IV (that is, a man, his wife, unmarried children and married sons), 47 joint families of type V (that is, a man, his wife, unmarried children, married sons and unmarried brothers), and 20 joint families of type VI (that is, a man, his wife, unmarried children, married sons, unmarried brothers, and married brothers and their families). This shows that two types of families dominate over all others – one consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried children (154 out of 399 or 38.6%) and secondly, one consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried and married children (137 out of 399 or 34.3%).

Edwin Driver (1962: 112-120) conducted a survey in 1958 in Nagpur district in (then) Bombay State. He contacted 2,314 families, 882 living in the city, 309 in the town and 1,123 in the villages. Of these, 93.3 per cent were Hindu families and 6.7 per cent were non-Hindu families. The analysis of the 2,314 families revealed that in the city, 22.9 per cent families were joint and 77.1 per cent nuclear; in the town, 24.9 per cent were joint and 75.1 per cent nuclear; and in the village, 37.0 per cent were joint and 63.0 per cent nuclear. Taking all the three areas (city, town and villages) together, 30.0 per cent families were found joint and 70.0 per cent nuclear (see, Kapadia, 1966: 297). As is evident from these figures, there are more nuclear families in the urban areas and more joint families in the rural areas.

Analyzing the pattern of family with reference to the income group, Driver found that in the rural areas, joint families are more in the higher income group (Rs. 1,000 and over) than in the lower, whereas in the urban areas, they (joint families) are less in the higher income groups than in the lower. He also studied the family pattern with reference to generational differences. While in the older generation, he found 16.03 per cent families joint and 28.48 per cent nuclear, in the younger generation he found 14.0 per cent joint and 41.5 per cent nuclear, showing thereby that the joint family is more frequent among the older couples (see, Kapadia, 1966).

The University School of Economics and Sociology, Bombay carrying out the economic survey of Greater Bombay in 1957 analyzed the patterns of 13,369 families, out of which 74.8 per cent were Hindu families. The data on these families showed that 11.52 per cent families were uni-member, 5.74 per cent nuclear, 8.04 per cent nuclear with some affinal relative, 34.02 per cent marginal joint, and 40.68 per cent joint families (see, Kapadia, 1966: 297-98). This shows that nearly 75.0 per cent were joint families and only 17.26 per cent were truly nuclear families.

## Notes

Sachchidananda (1977) studied 720 families in 1970 selected from thirty villages in Shahabad district in Bihar. From each village, he selected twenty-four families on the stratified random sample basis. The three variables used for stratifying the families were: caste (two levels), size of landholding (three levels) and sharecropping (two levels). He selected two families from each level-group. The families in the sample covered 6,675 persons.

Out of the total families studied, 25.8 per cent were nuclear and 74.2 per cent joint (here nuclear family included the dependents also). Sachchidananda analyzed the relationship between the type of the family and different variables like caste, education, landholding, and size of the family. He found that though the number of joint families was high in all the three types of castes – upper (70.0%), middle (76.0%), and scheduled castes (89.0%) – but contrary to expectations, there were more nuclear families in upper castes (30.0%) than in middle castes (24.0%) and scheduled castes (11.0%). Relating education with family pattern, he found that nuclearity tends to rise with the level of education. While 39.0 per cent families were nuclear where the level of family education was matric and above, only 24.0 per cent families were nuclear where the level of family education was middle or less. As regards the relationship between the family pattern and landholding is concerned, he found that as landholdings increase, the number of joint families also increase, or less the landholdings, less the joint families and more the landholdings, more the joint families. Lastly, analyzing the range of kin constituents, he found that 26.0 per cent families consisted of only primary kin, 62.0 per cent consisted of primary and secondary kin, and 3.0 per cent consisted of primary, secondary, tertiary, and distant kin.

Pauline Kolenda (1968) used the quantitative data on the composition of households (co-residential, commensal family units) from twenty-six studies conducted between 1950s and 1970s, including nine village studies, ten studies of individual castes, and surveys from seven districts. Her findings are: (1) While the majority of the people may live in joint and supplemented nuclear families, the majority of households/ families are nuclear in structure. (2) Regional differences are more evident in the proportions of joint families. There are higher proportions of joint families on the Gangetic plain than in Central India or Eastern India (including West Bengal). (3) The joint family is more characteristic of upper and landowning castes than of lower and landless castes. (4) Caste rank is more closely related to the size and the proportion of joint families. However, Kolenda's assumptions require further careful research.

This author also studied the family pattern while engaged in two different research projects (on "Drug Abuse Among Students" in 1976 and "Rights of Women: A Feminist Perspective" in 1988). In the first project, 4,181 respondents (students) were studied in one city (Jaipur), while in the second project, 753 families were studied in eight villages of one district (Jaipur). Both the studies showed that the joint family system has not completely disappeared, though the number of nuclear families is large. In the 1988 study, 51.8 per cent families were found joint and 48.2 per cent nuclear.

## The Emerging Trends

Taking all the above-mentioned empirical studies together (of Desai, Kapadia, Ross, Shah, Mukherjee, Gore, Driver, Bombay University, Sachchidananda, Kolenda, and Ahuja), the following conclusions may be derived regarding the change in family structure in our country:

1. The number of fissioned families is increasing, that is, sons prefer to live separately from their parents but at the same time continue to fulfil their traditional obligations towards them.
2. There is more jointness in traditional communities and more nuclearity in communities exposed to outside influences.
3. The size of the traditional family (that is, co-resident and commensal kinship unit) has become smaller.
4. So long the cultural ideal that a male should look after his parents and his teen-age brothers and sisters persists, the functional type joint family will be sustained in our society.

It is not possible to specify when the Indian family began to undergo changes. The system never was completely static of course, and change proceeded slowly throughout the twentieth century. Until the end of the third decade of the twentieth century, however, there was no political, social or industrial

power that could successfully break Indian family's self-imposed isolation from the families of the rest of the world. Marked change followed from the fourth decade of the twentieth century, particularly after the independence.

It could now be said that changes from 'traditional' to 'transitional' family include trends toward: (1) neo-local residence, (2) functional jointness, (3) equality of individuals, (4) equal status for women, (5) joint mate-selection, and (6) weakening of family norms.

### ***Neo-local Residence***

After marriage, children may live for some time with their parents but soon they prefer to live separately. As urbanization and industrialization proceed, more and more young married couples and their families find their residences being determined by the location of their jobs. Neo-local residence is, therefore, becoming more common. Sometimes these neo-local families eventually return to their stem (parental) families, but often they do not.

### ***Functional Jointness***

The neo-local residence may lead to weakening of ties with tertiary and distant kin but not with primary and secondary kin living separately. The married sons and their wives continue to fulfil their obligations to their parents and siblings. The ties are maintained with them not only because of the obligation to them but also because of the affection and respect for them. Mutual help in various exigencies of life (like sickness, old age, accident, unemployment, etc.) and economic co-operation with primary and secondary kin remain important characteristics of neo-local families.

### ***Equality of Individuals***

Treating spouses and other members of the family on the basis of equality is part of a larger ideological change. A pervasive philosophy of individualism which asserts the importance of the person over the continuity of the group (family) appears to be spreading over much of the world. As such, patriarch or parents in the family no longer try to impose their authority on the children but give them more freedom now to determine their own goals and means to achieve them. The worth of the individual is recognized and his/her wishes are now considered more important in the new family. The individual's status is evaluated not by his age or relationship but by his own accomplishments. As such, the status of the family is determined for each generation anew.

### ***Equal Status for Women***

The joint family has been associated with the subordination of women. Women are assigned all the domestic responsibilities and kept busy with cooking, cleaning, washing, and child-rearing roles. They are given the status of sex partners but not the full legal and other rights of wives. The emerging family is doing much to change this. The women are gaining a certain power. Coupled with this is the fact that child marriages have been replaced by adult marriages and the fact that education for girls is spreading rapidly. Women have also started taking up jobs in the expanding economy and their salary is used for meeting the family expenses and raising the quality of life. In such families, men have come to treat women on terms of equality. While the philosophy of equal rights for women receives more acceptance in families of working women; in families of non-working women, however, this is not much talked of. Because of women's inability to make any economic contribution, the power of money leads men in such families to expect deference from their wives. No family system will grant full equality to women as long as the daily work involving house and children is regarded as women's responsibility.

### ***Joint Mate-selection***

In the 'traditional' family, the marriages for the children were arranged by parents without consulting them. In the 'transitional' family, the parents and children jointly make selection of the spouses. This joint selection reduces the chances of conflict and the newly married couple spends a few months/years in the parental family before establishing a separate household. The newly married wife who



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moves in the family often is subordinated to members of the family until she has been so socialized into the new family that opposition to its customs and practices has been reduced. Even if the new spouse opts for a separate residence, she is able to get along with in-laws and fulfilling obligations toward them assumes greatest importance.

**Weakening of Family Norms**

The family norms in the 'transitional' family have weakened to the extent that distribution of opportunities and rewards is determined by individual's qualities and not by his membership in the family. Indian traditional family was structured according to highly *particularistic* criteria. *Particularism* refers to the distribution of opportunities and rewards according to one's membership in the family rather than according to any special qualifications or abilities which an individual possesses. In our early society, family membership was so important that the family controlled the system of rewards and distributed them. A person's opportunities for employment and the kind of work he did was determined largely by his position in a given family. The division of labour was not highly specialized and almost any adult could be trained fairly quickly to fill almost any occupational position. This division of labour is referred to as *functional diffuseness*. By contrast, the demands of a modern industrial economy require the application of *universalistic* criteria. *Universalism* involves the assignment of opportunities on the basis of special training and skills, irrespective of family and other relationship. *Functional specificity* involves a specialized division of labour.

As India began to modernize, the particularistic requirements of the family system ran head on into the increasingly universalistic requirements of the occupational system. The traditional norms demanded that contacts with outsiders be minimized and specified that contractual relations with outsiders were not specially binding. Those who owned or managed industries were faced with a dilemma. If they acted in terms of traditional norms, their business suffered; if they used universalistic criteria, they violated obligations and their families suffered. In the long run, it was the family which yielded to the demands of industrialization.

It may be concluded that the trends described are just the trends. It would be a mistake to conclude that traditional (joint) family is breaking down and/or patriarch's/parent's domination is disappearing. The conjugal families might be found here and there in some urbanized and industrialized regions but such families cannot be viewed as symptoms of the breakdown of time-honoured ways. The trend toward conjugal family system is yet to appear. The rural community is totally unaffected by this (conjugal) system.

**Causes of Preference for Specific Family Pattern**

Why do people like or dislike joint (or traditional) families or nuclear (or fissioned) families? For preferring joint family, the *first* reason is the desire for economic security against the various exigencies of life and the higher cost of living. While in earlier times, security against risks like sickness, old age, unemployment, accident, etc. was provided by family, caste, village, and some institutions run by the philanthropists, today the caste and the village, etc. no longer provide the required protection. In some cases, the state has taken up the responsibility of providing this protection through Employees State Insurance Scheme, Old Age Benefit Scheme, Workmen's Compensation Scheme, Maternity Benefit Scheme, etc., but these schemes cover only certain types of industrial establishments and some private and public concerns. Even all the workers working in these concerns are not eligible to get the benefits unless they fulfil certain conditions. There are no social security schemes for the 70 per cent of our population dependent on agriculture. All this has forced people in our society to depend on the only available institution of family for help in period of necessity. The *second* reason is the economic independence of women and their jobs. The advantage of having parents-in-law in the family is that the children of the working daughter-in-law can be properly looked after in her absence. The *third* reason is the traditional feeling of responsibility and attitude of respect and affection for elder and younger family members. Our youth may not accept the 'religious' responsibility of looking after their old parents and younger siblings but they definitely consider it their 'social' responsibility to support their kin. The *last* reason is the feeling that it gives power and prestige to family members.

On the other hand, the causes for preferring nuclear families or separate dwellings are to avoid conflicts, to get more freedom from family control, and to have a place which one may call as one's own and do as one likes, to get more privacy, to pursue one's educational aspirations and social ambitions, and to remain economically independent and thus achieve higher standards of living by taking to the occupation of one's own choice.

### Functional and Dysfunctional Aspects of Change

The change in the structure from traditional to fissioned or transitional or residential nuclear family as well as change in attitudes in favour of nuclearity and against jointness is both functional as well as dysfunctional. It is functional, *first* because traditional (joint) family creates drones and parasites. Some members do not work thinking that other family members are there to support them. This is because the traditional (joint) family functions on the principle of "one for all and all for one". Even if a person does not earn anything, he, his spouse and his children get the same attention from the family head as the children of earning members get. Therefore, even if these non-earning members try to get some job, the efforts are half-hearted. This leads to suspicions, misunderstandings, and quarrels affecting the harmonious relations of members and the organization of family. *Second*, joint family curbs individualism. The youngsters have become conscious of their rights and status and demand re-orientation of relationship within the family. But the elders, being trained in the old traditions, deny it because of which children lose initiative of hard work. *Third*, joint family is a hot bed of quarrels and bickerings. A woman whose husband earns more agitates, revolts and demands separation. Most of the quarrels start because of the narrow-minded, suspicious, conservative, jealous, superstitious, talkative and quarrelsome women. The uneven distribution of burden of work among women, the upbringing of children, and the differentiation in treatment of women by the elders also becomes a frequent source of trouble. Further, the very nature of the joint family creates tensions among the members because either they are unwilling to adjust themselves by accepting the roles and duties assigned to them by their position in the family or because they are incapable of accommodating members who deviate a little from the traditional pattern. *Finally*, joint family adversely affects the status of women. They lead a life of drudgery and have no voice in the upbringing of children. They feel repressed and suffer from emotional strains.

The change in traditional (joint) family is dysfunctional *first* because it leads to the fragmentation of landholdings, which affects the agricultural production and national income of the country. According to an estimate, 55 to 60 per cent of our agriculturists possess less than five acres of land, 35 to 40 per cent possess 5-25 acres, and only 5 to 10 per cent possess more than 25 acres. Therefore, 5 per cent of our cultivators are well off, 9 per cent are fairly well, and 86 per cent are the worst sufferers. The break in the joint family necessitates the division of property and the small pieces of land owned by the cultivators come to be further divided, making it impossible for the owners to use scientific methods in cultivation. This adversely affects the agricultural yield, the economic status of the family and the economic progress of the society. *Second*, the disintegration of the residential jointness has negatively affected us in the sense that joint family was an asylum for the old and the weak. Though in recent years, the government has framed several schemes for providing social security to the old, the sick, the disabled, and the unemployed etc., as already stated above, but only a small section of population of our country is covered by these schemes. Because of this, many people depend on family for the required protection. In fact, every member in a joint family is provided with a secure environment in which he can fulfil not only his survival but his religious and recreational needs as well. *Third*, in the emerging residential nuclear family, an individual is not able to develop the values of love, faith and sacrifice as he was able to do in a joint family. Such training in integrative processes provided us the required experience of life, developed our social maturity, and thus contributed much to our personality development. It is because of these benefits that it is said that traditional (joint) family life in boyhood is a school; in youth a safety-device; in old age a solace; and at all times a venerable institution.

### Future of Traditional (Joint) Family

The traditional (joint) family in India is not going to die soon. Kapadia (1966: 331) also felt that the general assumption that the joint family is dying out is invalid. It is strong not only in semi-industrial

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towns but even among the communities concentrated in the big cities. Thus, the traditional (joint) family has not disintegrated but is passing through severe stresses and strains and its future is not bleak. Despite the clashes between different generations, there is a strong feeling for this traditional (joint) family in the generation that is coming up. There is respect for discipline, co-operation in family work and a general feeling of content in the family environment.

Aileen Ross (1961: 51), however, holds a different viewpoint. She feels that if families (living separately) do not come into contact over long periods of time, feelings of family obligation and emotional attachment to family members will almost certainly weaken and the authority of the former patriarch break down. When this happens, there will be little left to maintain a feeling of and desire for identity within the larger kinship group.

This author's view is that we must give importance to those factors which affect/change the pattern of family structure through time. Five of these most important factors are: (1) marriage of a son and entering of a daughter-in-law in the family, (2) demise of a senior male/female member, (3) getting a high status work assignment in other place, (4) jeopardizing of economic stability in the family, and (5) conflicts among brothers, severance of sibling ties, and diverting of a man's loyalties from lineal ties to conjugal ties. Thus, every family has a potentiality of the developmental cycle. Though joint family is a cultural ideal of domestic organization in India, yet the family cannot be viewed as a static entity. Since the kinship obligations are normally not easily ignored in Indian/Hindu family, we may have small-range, intermediate-range and large-range kinship families, as well as dependent nuclear families along with the independent nuclear families. Thus, we cannot conceive of the formation of many 'independent fissioned' families detached and divorced from kin-group and traditional (joint) family interests, even after several decades when there is bound to be considerable progress in industrialization and educational and other fields in our country.

### **Change in Intra-family Relations**

After discussing change in the structure of family, we will now analyze change in the intra-family and inter-family relationships. The traditional (joint) family in India was organized around the important relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and between brothers. These relationships have undergone some change in recent years. We will assess change in each set of relationship separately.

### **Relations between Parents and Children**

Relationship between father and son in the traditional family was based more upon respect and fear rather than only on affection. These feelings toward the father were quite strong so that an effective bond was created. Today, the relations between parents and children may be discussed in terms of (i) holding of authority, (ii) freedom of discussing problems, (iii) opposition of parents by children, and (iv) modes of imposing penalty.

Power and authority in the traditional family stood generally in inverse relationship. Power was based upon generation, sex and relative age, and it was vested principally in males of the older generation. The patriarch was virtually all powerful. It was he who decided the type of education to be imparted to children, the occupation they had to take to, and even the selection of mates for them. He was not obliged to consult the young children on any issue. It was considered to be bad manners for the youngsters to argue with or talk back to their seniors. They were not to question the orders or the deeds of the elders. This was based on the expectation that a man of the upper generation and an elder man in the same generation should be looked upon with respect. The eldest woman had also her own authority so much so that in many respects it was she whose decision was final, for example, in the management of the household. Kathleen Gough too found in her study of Tanjore village in 1952 (cf. McKim Marriott, 1955: 44) that within each patrilineal extended family, all submit to the oldest man. David Mandelbaum in his analysis of Indian family (cf. Ruth Anshen, 1949: 94) mentioned that the grandfather was theoretically the head of the family until his death. This gave him power over his wife, children, and younger brothers and sisters. Even those who moved away to distant cities were theoretically still members of the family and, therefore, under his control, although he could not supervise their day-to-day affairs. On his death, the authority passed to the next eldest

male. The young had unlimited responsibility toward the patriarch and the parents. The indoctrination of the children was thorough and since each person's position in the family improved with age, there was little occasion for revolt against the system.

But it appears that today in the urban educated families, the grandfather is losing his authority. The eldest member is no longer the patriarch he used to be two generations ago. The new ideology and new occupational choices have made a considerable difference. The authority is shifting from the patriarch to the parents of the children who consult their youngsters on all important issues before taking any decisions about them. Referring to this change, Ross (1961: 93) also mentions that her study did not show that grand-parents were as influential in the life of the joint family as had been expected. Out of 157 cases studied, she found that in 6.3 per cent cases, grandfather had the main authority in the family, in 59.2 per cent cases, father had the main authority, in 12.1 per cent cases, mother had the main authority and in 22.4 per cent cases, all adult members possessed the authority jointly. This shows the shift in the authority from grandfather to father and mother.

M.S. Gore too in his study in 1961 had asked his respondents as to who made major decisions regarding schooling, occupation and the choice of bride/groom for the children in the family. He found that in a very large number of cases, the children are not free to take their own decisions. Gore (1968: 138), therefore, maintained that it must be emphasized that only a small minority of persons about whom the decision is made takes the matter into its own hands – whether it be the choice of occupation, spouse or schooling.

However, children do discuss their problems with their parents. In his additional sample of 100 respondents, Gore found that 63 per cent children discussed their problems freely with their parents, 11 per cent did not discuss, while 19 per cent discussed but left the final decision to the eldest male (*Ibid*: 153). Kapadia (1966: 323) in his study of adolescent high school students found that 58 per cent respondents talked freely with their parents at meals or even at other times. This freedom of discussing problems by children with their parents is enjoyed more in the urban than the rural areas.

Margaret Cormack (1969) also found in her study of 500 students that children today enjoy more freedom. They speak freely in front of adults, spend money as they choose, select their own clothes and go out-side unaccompanied. When she asked her respondents how they would raise their children, 47 per cent said with more freedom, 39 per cent said as they were raised, and only 3 per cent said with less freedom.

Children today not only discuss their problems with their parents but they even oppose them when their wishes and ideologies clash with the formalized restraint of their parents. Cormack found in this connection that 55 per cent students sometimes opposed their parents, 6 per cent often opposed them, while 33 per cent never opposed them. Desai (1953) too in his study of high school students in Poona found that there is a severe strain on the parent-ward relationship in the contemporary family. As many as 168 respondents in his survey reported that they had wished at times to leave home. Of these, 117 gave reasons for it also. Further, 64.1 per cent wanted to separate because of the authoritarian, disrespectful, unfair and unjust behaviour of their parents, 18.8 per cent because of the uncongenial atmosphere in the family and strain arising from it, 10.2 per cent due to the quarrels in the family, and 6.9 per cent gave some other reasons. The causes of conflicts between the younger and the older generations were: *Firstly*, belief among youngsters that elders try to impose their authoritation, unfair and unjust behaviour upon them. *Secondly*, growing belief among young children that they are more culturally advanced than their parents. *Thirdly*, children's feeling that their individualism is curbed due to temperamental strictness or exaction on the part of the elders. *Fourthly*, expectations of the younger members as to the way in which their needs should be served are not fulfilled. *Lastly*, difference in attitudes to social customs and religious beliefs.

Some legislative measures have also affected the relations between parents and children. Parents no longer can deprive their children from a share in the paternal property. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956, enjoins that the property of a male Hindu dying intestate shall devolve upon his specified heirs.

Probably it is because of this changed relationship that parents today do not use the old methods of punishing their children. Cormack (1969) found in this connection that the methods used today by the parents for punishing their children at home are: scolding, beating, forbidding to go outside,

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denying sweets and toys, and putting alone in the room. Ross (1961: 122) found that the modes of punishment used by parents to control their children are spanking, scolding, and reasoning.

Besides this general change in the relations between parents and children, we find more marked change today in the mother-daughter relations particularly. This is probably because daughter is no longer married at a very young age and she lives for quite a long period with her mother.

In spite of all these changes in the relations between parents and children, we find that the child is still so conditioned as to not to think in terms of the first person singular: his own rights, his own pleasures, his own status and his own privacy etc., but to think in terms of family. Even now, he regards the parents and other family members around him as more or less permanent and rarely thinks of cutting himself adrift from those who have brought him into this world and have been dear and close to him. Youngsters today follow the old pattern of respecting the elders. Their attitude is motivated by respect than by fear. There is cordiality between the two generations. The former authoritarian attitude of the elders is more or less absent in the contemporary family. Referring to this, Kapadia (1959: 292) writes that a considerable proportion of the younger generation does not feel great restraint or awe with parents or guardians. The elders also do not now attempt so firmly as in the past to impose the traditional ways on their children. Thus, the young people today do not like the imposition of views of elders on them. They want that they should be consulted and their opinions should be given adequate weight. Aileen Ross (1959) also feels that after the marriage, the new generation today no longer accepted the older authority as fully as in the past.

But whatever change has taken place in the relations between parents and children, it has some sociological implications. *One*, the process of socialization of children has been affected. *Two*, competence and ability of individual now determines individual's career more than the family interest. *Three*, because of the freedom enjoyed, children today get more incentive for work and opportunity for achieving their aspirations.

### **Relations between Husband and Wife**

The relationship between husband and wife in early family was institutionally weak. Wife was considered to be an outsider, intimate affection with whom might threaten the family. With time, proper indoctrination by mother-in-law and the birth of sons, however, wife came to have an interest in the family that nearly equalled that of her husband. And, in spite of the fact that the marriage had been arranged by the parents, real affection between husband and wife often developed. By the time the wife became a mother-in-law, the marriage was likely to be second in strength only to the father-son relationship.

Today, the relations between husband and wife have definitely undergone some change. Our hypothesis regarding the relations between husband and wife in the contemporary Indian family is characterized by: (i) little diminution in the husband's power role through sharing with and not completely transferring to his wife; (ii) some degree of sharing of the expressive role by husband and wife; (iii) little loss on the part of husband of the instrumental role resulting from sharing with his wife and not abandonment to his wife; (iv) some degree of companionship in urban educated family but its complete absence in rural family.

We will discuss our hypothesis by analyzing the relations between husband and wife in terms of: (a) power-allocation in decision-making, (b) closeness, and (c) emancipation.

#### ***Power Allocation***

No change in the Indian family is mentioned more often than the shift from one-sided male authority to the sharing of power by husband and wife. This change is significant because it has affected their roles in marriage and also has its repercussions on other aspects of their relationships.

Husband by convention is the arbitrary decision-maker and director of family policy in our families. The superordinate status of the husband is reflected in any wife's answers to three questions: (i) which of you is more dominant person; (ii) who is more important person in the family; and



(iii) who makes decisions in matters of mutual concern? Almost all wives are bound to credit their husbands with superiority in this area. But when it comes to (i) who budgets the family expenditure, and (ii) who disciplines the children or who advises them, a good number might credit themselves as equals (if not superior) in these aspects of the power role. The instrumental role of husband is based upon the expectations that he will be primarily responsible for the support of the family. Indicative of husband's *instrumental* role are: taking primary responsibility for the education of children, helping children with the home-work, competence in social choice, and being more aggressive than his wife. On the other hand, wife's *expressive* role lies in her mediation of conflict within family. For measuring the precise balance of power between husband and wife and for assessing their influence in all the family decisions, we can take some selected areas of decisions and find out who takes the final decision. Some of these areas could be: (i) whether or not husband should send money to parents and how much; (ii) whether or not wife should go to work or quit work; and (iii) whether or not to buy a scooter or an insurance policy, and so on. The possible answers to these questions could be: (a) husband always; (b) husband more than wife; (c) husband and wife exactly the same; (d) wife more than the husband; and (e) wife always. It is to be assumed in advance that contemporary husbands and wives, particularly in residentially nuclear families and in small joint families, would often talk things over in the process of arriving at a decision. Even a patriarchal husband may consult his wife as one source of opinion and one factor to be taken into consideration while he makes up his mind. The crucial question is not who takes part in the discussion but who makes the 'final' decision. By totaling as to in how many areas who takes the final decision, we can find out whether the family is husband-dominant (husband taking final decision) or wife-dominant (wife taking final decision) or equalitarian family (both taking decisions together). The equalitarian family may again be of two sub-types: (a) syncretic family, where husband and wife make most of their decisions jointly; and (b) autonomic family, where they assign equal number of separate decisions to both partners.

Under former historical circumstances, husband's economic and social roles almost automatically gave him pre-eminence. Under modern conditions, the roles of men and women, particularly in urban areas, have changed so much that husbands and wives are potential equals. It is no longer possible to assume that just because a man is a man, he is the boss. Today, the source of power has partly shifted from 'culture' to what is called 'resource' by Robert O' Blood (1968: 54-62). 'Resource' is defined as "anything that one partner may make available to the other helping the latter satisfy his/her needs or attain his/her goals." On this basis, the balance of power will be on the side of that partner who contributes greater resources to the marriage. This process of weighing the balance is not a conscious process, but it is an automatic re-adjustment which occurs as the contributing partner discovers that he has a lot to offer to the marriage, while the receiving partner feels indebted for what has already been given and for being dependent upon what he hopes to receive in future. The partner who has no 'resources' has, thus, less influence.

Emphasizing on 'resources' factor here in power allocation does not mean that 'culture', or what Max Weber has called 'traditional authority', has lost its importance. In fact, though both factors are important today but between the two, the latter is more significant in our society than the former. Using these two factors in the analysis of husband-wife relations, it may be maintained that though our family continues to be husband-dominant family, yet there is some change in the relations between husband and wife which is evident from the fact that husband today gives greater weight to his wife's opinion in almost all important issues before taking final decisions. The change in the balance of power between husband and wife is partly due to democratic change in our ideas about how men and women ought to treat each other and partly due to the fact that comparative 'resources' of Indian women have changed, that is, changed from *ideological* source of power to the *pragmatic* one. That average Indian family is husband-dominant and yet indicative of change in husband-wife relationships would be evident from wife's answers to the question: "When you and your husband differ about something, do you usually give in and do it your husband's way or does he usually come around to your point of view?" It should, however, be remembered that change in relations between husband and wife is found less among the rural families, immigrant families, uneducated couples, and in joint families in comparison to families engaged in non-traditional occupation or in nuclear and educated families.

Notes

*Closeness*

The change in the husband-wife relations in terms of closeness was best analyzed by M.S. Gore (1968: 178). He found that husband in the urban educated family is more close to his wife than in the rural illiterate family. In the traditional family, relation with mother is more primal than with wife. Comparing the closeness in relations between a man, his wife and his mother in the rural and urban areas, he found that closeness to mother in the urban areas, as expected, was less than in the rural areas, but strangely enough closeness to wife in the rural areas was more than in the urban areas. The equality in closeness to mother and wife was of course found more in the urban than in the rural areas. This shows that urban living by itself does not seem to reduce appreciably the proportion of persons who adhere to the traditional value attached to the filial relationship. The analysis of relationship between educational status and closeness, as analyzed by Gore (*Ibid*: 180), showed that the highly educated people are equally close to mother and wife while the moderately educated people are more close to mothers and less to wives like the illiterate people. Taking all the data analyzed by Gore, the relations between husband and wife, in terms of closeness, may be summarized as below: (1) In the ideal type joint family, man is more close to his mother than wife showing thereby the minimization of the significance of conjugal bond. (2) As there is no noticeable difference in the pattern of responses of persons from joint and nuclear families, it may be maintained that nuclear households are not really nuclear families. (3) As far as the rural, fringe, and urban differences are concerned, the urban people take the middle position regarding their relationship to their mother and wife as equally close in contrast to the rural and the fringe people who take extreme positions (of being close either to mother or to wife). (4) The image carried by women of man's relationship to his mother and wife approximates the experience of these relationships by the men themselves.

*Emancipation of Wife*

The change in the relations between husband and wife is also evident from the fact that while in the traditional family, husband and wife never used to go together for walks or social visits, now they are often found together particularly in the urban areas. Women are seen today taking food with their husbands, whereas in the traditional family husbands and wives never ate together. In fact, the typical pattern for women was to first serve the men of the household and later to eat by themselves. Taking meals together plays a very important 'companionship' function in the family for husband and wife.

In terms of dependence on husband also, we find change in husband-wife relationship. In the traditional family, wife was utterly dependent on her husband for her own support and the support of her children. A wife was conscious of her inferiority and dependence on her husband and, therefore, grateful to him for his support. But now husband no longer regards his wife as inferior to him in all respects and as utterly devoid of reasoning. He, therefore, not only consults her but also trusts her with serious matters. Wife no longer bears her sorrows in silence. To please husband is not the sole aim of a woman's existence. Even Ross recognized this change in her 1957 study. She found that in the joint family system too, there is a change in the relations of power between husband and wife. As husband and wife live together, and specially after children are born, they develop building interests, so their relationship gradually works out to a more even basis where they share responsibilities and authority.

One of the reasons for the changing relationship between husband and wife is that woman today is no longer an immature girl at the time of marriage. Being older at marriage, she is better able to assert her will as well as her claims on her husband.

In spite of this change, we cannot maintain that relationship between husband and wife in Indian families is developing on western lines. The traditional outlook on the husband-wife relationship is still so strong in our society that we cannot think of a change from patriarchal families to equalitarian families. As already indicated above, our family basically continues to be husband-dominant family. Majority of wives still accept their subordinate position to their husbands as natural and look up to his superior knowledge and judgement.

## Relations between Daughter-in-Law and Parents-in-Law

## Notes

Like change in relations between parents and children and between husband and wife, we find some change in relations of daughter-in-law with her in-laws. The present position of relations between a daughter-in-law and father-in-law shows that woman uses less *purdah* (veil) from her father-in-law. Some women even talk freely with their father-in-law. The use of *sari* today to cover the face completely when talking to an elder male has less and less ideological support. Some women, instead of drawing out the *sari* in front of the face to observe *purdah*, turn away the face and point their gaze downwards and thus symbolically observe *purdah*. In a few traditional families in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, however, some women continue to hide their faces from their fathers-in-law in the old way, though there are class-caste and urban-rural residence variants here also.

As regards freedom in discussion with father-in-law is concerned, though women in the urban educated families do enjoy it, but in traditional rural families they are not much free.

In fact, the pattern of family also affects the father-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship most. The relationship between the two would depend whether their family is joint or nuclear in which father-in-law is the occasional visitor, and whether the mother-in-law is alive or not. In the nuclear family, the relations would not be as formal and orthodox as in the joint family. Less customary distance is maintained in the former than in the latter families.

The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship in the traditional family was strong but institutionally troublesome. The mother-in-law's power over the bride was nearly absolute. She could require that her son repudiate the marriage and send the girl back to her family. There was in fact less affection between the two women and the daughter-in-law was likely to hate her mother-in-law. Today, though we find some change but it is less significant than the one in father-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. This has a socio-psychological rather than pure sociological orientation. A mother devotes more time to her son to satisfy her "wish for recognition". She even sacrifices her comforts and luxuries for him. In return, son consults her on all important issues. But after the marriage, due to the physical attraction for his wife and the feeling of moral responsibility, he starts consulting his wife more and pays more attention to her than to his mother. Then mother comes to feel that her daughter-in-law is responsible for this 'neglect' on her son's part. She, therefore, develops antagonistic attitude towards her daughter-in-law and brands her as lazy, callous, impertinent and disobedient. On the other hand, daughter-in-law enters her husband's family with the stereotyped attitude that every mother-in-law is strict, harsh, cruel, wicked, sadistic, scheming, and nagging-type. The two women, thus, fail to understand each other leading to tensions between the two. Mother-in-law's direct and complete authority over the young bride is also due to the necessity of integrating the new wife into the family, but the educated bride resents this dominance and revolts against the rigid control and thus comes in conflict with her mother-in-law. Yet another reason for the conflict between the two is that they spend most of their time together, getting fewer outside interests on which to release frustrations and aggressions. Thus, the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law based on mutual distrust and ambivalence was found not only in the traditional family but exists even in the present family. We find some change in the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law today. The majority of the mothers choose their daughter-in-law very carefully and are by and large compromising and understanding. The majority of newly married girls too are willing to make adjustments to ensure the success of their marriage. It is expected that the dominance of mother-in-law over her daughter-in-law would decline as family structures change from joint families to nuclear units and the two women become spatially separated.

Taking change in all the sets of relationships together (that is, between parents and children, husband and wife, and daughter-in-law and parents-in-law), it may be concluded that the relationship structure in Indian family is undergoing the following changes in the contemporary society: (1) Younger generation claims more individuality. (2) Conjugal relationship does not get any preference to consanguineous relationship. (3) People whose source of power is ideological no longer try to impose their authority on the youngsters.

## **4.5 Decline of Joint Family: Causes and Consequences**

What are the factors responsible for the disruption of traditional (joint) family system? No one set of influences brought about changes in family. Nor is it possible to assign priority to any of them. It was a combination of industrialization with its application of universalistic criteria to an ever-widening sphere, ideals of individualism, equality and freedom, and the possibility of an alternative way of life which produced the 'transitional' family. Milton Singer (1968: 434) regards four factors responsible for change in family: residential mobility, occupational mobility, scientific and technical education, and monetization. This author has also identified five factors which have affected the family most. These are: education, urbanization, industrialization, change in the institution of marriage, specially in the age of marriage, and the legislative measures.

### **Education**

Education has affected family in more than one way. It has not only brought change in the attitudes, beliefs, values and ideologies of the people but has also created and aroused the individualistic feelings. In India, education is spreading not only among the males but among the females too. While the male literacy rate increased from 9.8 in 1901 to 15.6 in 1931, 34.4 in 1961, 46.9 in 1981, and 55.07 in 1991, among the females it increased from 0.6 in 1901 to 2.9 in 1931, 13.0 in 1961, 24.8 in 1981, and 30.09 in 1991. The number of recognized educational institutions increased from 2.31 lakh in 1951 (2.09 lakh primary, 13,600 middle, and 8,300 secondary and higher secondary) to 7.55 lakh in 1985 (5.28 lakh primary, 1.34 lakh middle and 93,000 secondary and higher secondary), and the enrolment in the educational institutions in the same period increased from 24 million to 132 million. This increasing education not only brings changes in the philosophy of life of men and women but also provides new avenues of employment to the latter. After becoming economically independent, women demand more voice in family affairs and also refuse to accept anybody's dominance over them. This shows how education brings changes in relations in the family, ultimately leading to the structural changes too.

I.P. Desai, and Aileen Ross have also referred to the reciprocal influence of educational system and family system on each other. The former has referred to the working of education against the joint family in two ways: one, by emphasizing individualism, it puts before the people the concept of the type of the family which is contrary to the prevailing concept of joint family, and two, it prepares the people for occupations which cannot be found in their native places, as a result of which they separate from the ancestral family and live in areas which provide them the occupations suited to their educational equipment. In course of time, these people lose contact with the parental family and imbibe new ways of living and thinking which are inimical to the joint family sentiment and conducive to the nuclear family.

But in his own study of 423 families in Mahuva, surprisingly Desai found that with the increase in the educational level, jointness increased and nuclearity decreased. Observing the relationship between the level of education and the degree of jointness, he found that jointness is more conducive to education, and thus by encouraging education may lead to its own dissolution. Desai's opinion is that only a few people subscribe to papers or purchase books, and the views and the beliefs of the people are not directly affected by the general reading of the newspapers, periodicals or English books in particular or by the western educational system in general. Whatever effect education might have on the people can be through the influence of what we might call the new elite and the home and the school environment. Thus, it is not the amount of education of the head of family or the whole household that may be the proper indication of the effect of the new or different views and beliefs as the position of persons with new ideas and patterns of communication in a place.

We, however, do not find any logic in Desai's argument. It is true that the type of the contacts of an individual outside the family does affect his attitudes and beliefs but the educational level of his own and his family members also is an important factor that changes his beliefs and ideologies. It, therefore, cannot be maintained, as Desai does, that the amount of education of family members is not a very significant factor in the change in the structure and the organization of the family.

Similarly, Desai's finding that with the increase in the educational level, jointness increases and nuclearity decreases also does not appear to be true. Probably, his finding is the result of the wrong methodology used in his research study for finding out the educational level of the family. He had taken the average education of the family on the basis of the average number of years of schooling put in by the 'non-educants' members (that is, those adults and grown up children who are not likely to take any further education). Thus, the total years of schooling put in by all these members divided by the number of members was taken as the average education of the family. This method of assessing the educational level of family is definitely questionable. Had he used the method generally used by other scholars, he might have got different results. And even just for the sake of argument, assuming that his above method of finding out the educational level of family was correct, why did the group of families with graduate members show all the families nuclear and not a single family as joint? If more education leads to preference for jointness, the 'graduate families' must have shown higher number of joint families than the matriculate or non-matriculate families. On the basis of these arguments, therefore, we do not feel like agreeing with Desai about the type of relationship he has shown between education and family structure. We believe, education increases the choice for nuclearity and not for the jointness.

Ross (1961) has said that the present occupations are such that they require special education, skill and training. Therefore, to raise the living standard of their children from their own, parents always remain ambitious for giving higher education to their sons, particularly in middle and upper class families in the urban areas. Some of the poor parents are so ambitious that they try to give the highest possible education to their sons even at the cost of their sufferings, sacrifice, and trials and tribulations. Sometimes they deprive themselves of comforts and even food and clothes. In such cases, however, if by chance their sons fail in examinations or do not reach up to the mark, they bring disappointments to their parents. In a few such cases, parents keep on nagging their children and this becomes so extreme that sons' ability to succeed is crippled and they always break off from their parents. On the other hand, there are some parents who, because of their poverty, are not very much ambitious about their children's education, but their children are extremely ambitious. They (children), therefore, leave their parents and go to different towns and cities for education. To support themselves economically, they take up tuitions or jobs. These children, thus, gradually are cut off from family ties. After the marriage also, they continue to live in cities. This is how their education affects their families (*Ibid*: 208-231). In the case of females also, the educated girls develop new attitudes towards husband, children and family, and clash with their conventional-minded mother-in-law and insist on separate households. All this shows the impact of education on family pattern. As the level of education rises, the percentage of those in favour of the nuclear family increases and the percentage of people who conform to the pattern of joint family living (in behaviour) decreases.

## Urbanization

Urbanization is another factor that has affected the family. Urban population has grown at a faster rate in our country in the last few decades. In the mid-eighteenth century, approximately 10.0 per cent of the population in India were town-dwellers. During the nineteenth century, the number of inhabitants of India's towns grew ten-fold over a hundred years. In the twentieth century, while the country's entire population grew from 238 million in 1901 to 685 million in 1981, the number of town-dwellers alone grew by 521.0 per cent. In 1961, the urban population constituted 17.97 per cent of the total population which increased to 19.9 per cent in 1971, 23.34 per cent in 1981 and 25.72 per cent in 1991. The decennial growth rate of urban population in 1961 was 26.41 per cent which increased to 38.23 per cent in 1971, 46.14 per cent in 1981 and 36.19 per cent in 1991. In exact terms, the urban population of India in 1961 was 78 million which increased to 109 million in 1971, 159 million in 1981 and 217 million in 1991.

The urban families differ from the rural families not only in composition but in ideology too. It has already been stated that the nuclear family in urban areas is somewhat smaller than the non-urban nuclear family, and that the urban-dweller is more likely to choose the nuclear family than the rural-dweller. M.S. Gore (1968) has maintained that the urban families show a shift away from joint family norms in their attitudes, role perceptions, and in their behaviour. For example, in the area of decision-



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making, unlike the rural families, in the urban families parents rather than the eldest males take decisions about their children. Similarly, urban people who favour the idea of brothers living together after the death of parents are fewer than the rural people with the same attitude.

I.P. Desai (1964), however, did not share this belief that urbanization as such leads to the break up of the joint family system. In his analysis of the effect of urbanization on jointness, he observed significant relationship between the duration of the stay of the family in the urban area and traditional jointness. His presumption was that longer the duration of the stay of family in an urban area, lower will be the degree of jointness. However, he found that the jointness tends more among the 'very old' (living in the town for fifty years or more) and 'old' families (living in the town for twenty-five to fifty years) than in the 'new' ones (living since twenty-five years or less).

Louis Wirth (1938) also believed that city is not conducive to the traditional type of family life. According to him, the family as a unit of social life is emancipated from the larger kinship group characteristic of the village, and the individual members pursue their own diverging interests in their vocational, educational, religious, recreational, and political life.

Our view is that the role of urbanization in changing the family system has been very significant. The urban living weakens joint family pattern and strengthens nuclear families. Cities provide increasing opportunities for new occupations and higher education. Those who deviate from the traditional family occupation and take to new professions show a greater shift in their attitudes than those who follow traditional occupations. Similarly, educated persons in urban areas are less in favour of, if not less conforming to, joint family norms. It may, however, be maintained that the change in attitude has direct relationship with length of stay in the city. Cities provide opportunities to females also for gainful employment and when woman starts earning, she seeks freedom in many spheres. She tries to break away more and more from her husband's family of orientation. Urban residence thus seems to introduce a certain measure of variation in family pattern in our society.

## Industrialization

Industrialization got under way in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Cities grew around the new industries. Before the industrialization, we had (i) agrarian non-monetized economy, (ii) a level of technology where the domestic unit was also the unit of economic exchange, (iii) a non-differentiation of occupations between father and son and between brothers and brothers, and (iv) a value system where authority of the elders and the sanctity of tradition were both supported as against the criterion of 'rationality'. But the industrialization has brought the economic and the socio-cultural changes in our society in general and family in particular. In the economic field, it has resulted in the specialization in work, occupational mobility, monetization of the economy, and a breakdown of the link between the kinship and the occupational structures; in the social field, it has resulted in the migration of people from rural to urban areas, spread of education, and a strong centralized political structure; in the cultural field, it has brought secularization of beliefs.

There have been three important effects of industrialization on family organization: *First*, the family which was a principal unit of production has been transformed into a consumption unit. Instead of all family members working together in an integrated economic enterprise, a few male members go out of the home to earn the family's living. This has affected not only the traditional structure of the joint family but also the relations among the members. *Second*, factory employment has freed young adults from direct dependence upon their families. As their wages have made them financially independent, the authority of the head of the household has weakened further. In the city, in many cases, along with men their wives also have started working and earning. This has affected intra-family relations to some extent. *Finally*, children have ceased to be economic assets and have become liabilities. Although in a few cases, the use and abuse of child labour has also increased, law does not permit children to work. At the same time, educational requirements have increased, lengthening dependence upon parental support. Accommodation in the cities is expensive and child care is demanding. Thus, work and home have become separated due to industrialization.

Some sociologists have, however, recently challenged the theory of emergence of nuclear families due to industrialization. This challenge is based on the results of empirical studies and the

documentation of the variety of family systems in different parts of the world. Studies by scholars like M.S.A. Rao, M.S. Gore, and Milton Singer have shown that jointness is more preferred and prevalent in business communities, and many nuclear families maintain widespread kin ties. Several recent researches in the Industrialized West have also emphasized the supportive role of kin and their function of acting as a buffer between the family and the impersonal wider world (Abbi, 1970). Social historians too have shown that the nuclear family was prevalent as a cultural norm in Europe and the United States even before industrialization. However, it has to be noted that the supportive role of kin does not have the compulsory character which is found in the family obligations of the Indian nuclear family. The youngsters in the nuclear family still willingly follow the norm of responsibility towards the primary kin, such as parents and siblings, solidarity of the close kin, and some sense of unity of the family, even though living in separate households (Leela Dube, 1974: 311). All these changes have modified our family system. While the population movement from the rural to the urban areas has led to decline in authoritarian power, growth of secularism has developed a value system which emphasizes individual initiative and responsibility. Individual now functions without any restrictive familial controls. Formerly, when man worked in the family and all family members helped him in the work, there was more intimacy among the family members but now since he works in the industry away from the family, the intimacy in the relations has been adversely affected. The effect of industrialization on the pattern of family relationship is also evident from the decline in self-sufficiency of the family, and attitudinal changes toward family. Industrialization has, thus, contributed markedly to the creation of a new social and psychological setting in which the survival of the early joint family with its authoritarian familistic organization has become very difficult.

### **Change in Marriage System**

Change in age for marriage, freedom in mate selection and change in attitude towards marriage have also affected our family system. Children who marry at a late age neither obey the parental authority nor perceive the eldest male as the main person in decision-making. The freedom in mate selection has promoted inter-caste marriages which in turn has affected the relationship structure in the family. Similarly, since marriage is no longer considered religiously important and break in marital relations has come to be legally accepted, it has weakened the corporate authority of the family as symbolized by the husband's power.

### **Legislative Measures**

Lastly, legislative measures have also their impact on family pattern. Prohibition of early marriage and fixing the minimum age of marriage by the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, have lengthened the period of education and functionally contributed to the adjustment of couples in new environment after marriage. The freedom of mate selection and marriage in any caste and religion without the parents' consent after certain age permitted through by the Special Marriage Act, 1954, sanctioning of widow remarriage by the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, the freedom of breaking the marriage by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and giving share to daughters in paternal property by the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, have all not only modified the inter-personal relations and the composition of family but also the stability of joint family.

### **Family Disorganization**

Family disorganization is a condition of a family characterized by the breakdown of harmonious relations and co-operation among the members, or breakdown of social control, or unity and discipline. A state of disorganization in the family also exists when there is role conflict among the set of members, say between husband and wife or parents and children or daughter-in-law and parents-in-law or brothers and brothers. When a family does not seem to be functioning in a 'desirable' way, that is, when the enacted roles of members are not in conformity to the expected roles (of society), a state of disorganization is judged to exist. The 'personal disorganization' of any one member in the family (that is, the condition in which he cannot function effectively because of inner confusion usually resulting from his acceptance of contradictory standards of behaviour or because of having accepted

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conflicting roles or social norms or group loyalties) does not necessarily cause family disorganization. Individual's disorganization may be temporary or transitional due primarily to the immediate situation in which he finds himself, or it may be more lasting and deep-rooted in his personality.

William Ogburn (1955) has discussed family disorganization as resulting from the loss of family functions. According to him, one symptom of a disorganized family (which does not perform the expected functions) is the rapid increase in broken homes, signifying unhappy men and women whose expectations of harmonious marital life are frustrated in the functionalized family. Divorce produces problems not only for the parents but also for the children who suffer emotional conflict, loss of a parent, and often financial privation and destitution. Other symptoms of a disorganized family include illicit sexual activity, family desertion, frequent conflicts, frequent delinquent behaviour of children, etc.

In 1934, Ogburn discussed some major functions of the family before modern times and the changes which occurred in them with rapid advances in technology. These functions are: economic (production), protective (against illness, unemployment, accident, etc.), religious (teaching of ethical standards, scriptures, family prayers, etc.), recreational, educational, and status-conferring (which defined person's place in the community). He says, development in technology stripped the family of these traditional functions which are now being performed by other institutions. Family is no longer engaged in the production of food, tools, furniture, medicines, soaps, sewing clothes, etc. Protective function has been assumed by public organizations and the state. Religion has been largely removed from the home and family prayers have become uncommon. Recreation has become commercialized. Recreation ranging from clubs, games, amusement parks, swimming pools, takes people away from their families. Academic training is imparted not by families but by schools, colleges and other institutions. The function of individual's status being determined by his family is minimized. It now depends more on his occupation and income. Thus, family has fewer functions today according to Ogburn. He calls this process (of transfer of functions to other institutions) 'defunctionalization'.

His approach to family is, however, criticized on the basis that he oversimplified the role of material invention. Instead of using Ogburn's progressivist theory of change in family, cyclical theory (for example, Zimmerman's theory of family changing from trustee to domestic and atomistic, or Ross's theory of family changing from large joint to small joint and to nuclear family), and structural-functional theories (which focus more on the integration between the family and other institutions, particularly the occupational system, namely, Parson's 'structural isolation' theory) are used in explaining family change.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Fill in the blanks:**

- (i) Chattopadhyay has given ..... types of family.
- (ii) Burgess and Locke have classified families as institutional and .....
- (iii) The large kinship family comprises four types of kin: primary, secondary, ..... and distant.
- (iv) The minimum age of marriage fixed in the Child Marriage Restriant Act in .....
- (v) On the basis of kinship ties, the family has classified at conjugal and .....

**4.6 Summary**

- In the *functionalist* approach, family is regarded as a sub-system or as a part in relation to society as a whole. The functionalist approach assumes a universality of certain functions of family and around specific functions, it conceptualizes roles also. It further explains the relationship among family roles and considers the change in family functions or family roles mainly due to change in society or in norms and values.
- As a social unit, a family is defined as a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household or a sub-household.

- Simple family consists of a man, his wife and unmarried children. Sometimes it happens that one partner dies after the birth of some children and the other remarries. In that case, the unit consisting of two sets of children cannot any longer be termed 'simple'.
- That equalitarian family where husband and wife make most of the decisions jointly is called *syncratic* family and the one in which equal number of separate decisions are assigned to both partners is called *autonomic* family. The conjugal families are transitory in character and disintegrate with the death of the parents. The consanguine families, on the other hand, continue for a very long time because the existence of the family does not depend upon any couple.
- The *trustee* family has the right and power to make the family members conform to its wishes as this family has no concept of individual rights. The authority of the family head is not absolute but it is delegated to him in his role as trustee for carrying out family responsibilities.
- Karve has given five characteristics of traditional (joint) family: common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship, and some kinship relationship. The word 'common' or 'joint property' here, according to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, means that all the living male and female members upto three generations have a share in the paternal property and without the co-parcener's consent, the property cannot be sold or disposed off. The large joint family, according to Ross, consists of a man, his wife, parents, unmarried children, married children with or without their offsprings, and his brothers (married and unmarried).
- The normal custom in Indian society is that a young man and his wife begin their married life not in an independent household but with the husband's parents. The *fissioned independent family*, consisting of husband, wife and their unmarried children, is one where the head of the family (of procreation) is neither subject to the authority of any of his relatives nor economically dependent upon them; and the *fissioned dependent family* is one where the members (husband, wife and unmarried sons and daughters) live in a separate house but remain dependent on their kin, either in terms of functioning or in terms of property.
- In a democratic family, the authority is vested in one or more individuals on the basis of competence and ability, in an authoritarian family, the power is traditionally given only to the eldest male of the family because of his age and seniority. The head allows little individual freedom to other family members and may or may not consult them in decision-making. The status of a man is higher than his wife; in two generations, the status of a person in the higher generation is higher than the status of a person in the lower generation; in the same generation, the status of a person of higher age is higher than the status of a person of lower age; and the status of a woman is determined by the status of her husband in the family.
- In the rural community, firstly, the proportion of joint families (49.7%) is almost the same as that of nuclear families (50.3%). Secondly, when the nature of the family pattern is viewed in relation to castes, higher castes (e.g., Patidars, Brahmins, and Baniyas) have predominantly joint family, its proportion to the nuclear family being nearly 5: 3.
- The *parental family* was defined as one consisting of a man, his wife and unmarried children.
- As urbanization and industrialization proceed, more and more young married couples and their families find their residences being determined by the location of their jobs. Neo-local residence is, therefore, becoming more common. Sometimes these neo-local families eventually return to their stem (parental) families, but often they do not. The newly married wife who moves in the family often is subordinated to members of the family until she has been so socialized into the new family that opposition to its customs and practices has been reduced. The family norms in the 'transitional' family have weakened to the extent that distribution of opportunities and rewards is determined by individual's qualities and not by his membership in the family. Indian traditional family was structured according to highly *particularistic* criteria
- As India began to modernize, the particularistic requirements of the family system ran head on into the increasingly universalistic requirements of the occupational system. The traditional norms demanded that contacts with outsiders be minimized and specified that contractual relations with outsiders were not specially binding. There are no social security schemes for the 70 per cent of our population dependent on agriculture. All this has forced people in our society to depend on the only available institution of family for help in period of necessity. The change

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in traditional (joint) family is dysfunctional *first* because it leads to the fragmentation of landholdings, which affects the agricultural production and national income of the country.

- Children today not only discuss their problems with their parents but they even oppose them when their wishes and ideologies clash with the formalized restraint of their parents. Whatever change has taken place in the relations between parents and children, it has some sociological implications. *One*, the process of socialization of children has been affected. *Two*, competence and ability of individual now determines individual's career more than the family interest. *Three*, because of the freedom enjoyed, children today get more incentive for work and opportunity for achieving their aspirations. Under former historical circumstances, husband's economic and social roles almost automatically gave him pre-eminence. Under modern conditions, the roles of men and women, particularly in urban areas, have changed so much that husbands and wives are potential equals.
- In the traditional family, relation with mother is more primal than with wife. Comparing the closeness in relations between a man, his wife and his mother in the rural and urban areas.
- Milton Singer (1968: 434) regards four factors responsible for change in family: residential mobility, occupational mobility, scientific and technical education, and monetization. This author has also identified five factors which have affected the family most. These are: education, urbanization, industrialization, change in the institution of marriage, specially in the age of marriage, and the legislative measures.
- Urbanization is another factor that has affected the family. Urban population has grown at a faster rate in our country in the last few decades. In the mid-eighteenth century, approximately 10.0 per cent of the population in India were town-dwellers.
- The urban families differ from the rural families not only in composition but in ideology too.
- Family disorganization is a condition of a family characterized by the breakdown of harmonious relations and co-operation among the members, or breakdown of social control, or unity and discipline.

#### 4.7 Key-Words

1. Conjugal : Relating to marriage or the relationship of spouses.
2. Nuclear family : It is a term used to define a family group consisting of a pair of adults and their children.

#### 4.8 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by concept of family?
2. Discuss the forms of family.
3. What are the causes for the decline of joint family?
4. Write a short note on the Family System?

#### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) two (ii) companionship (iii) tertiary  
(iv) 1929 (v) consanguine

#### 4.9 Further Readings



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.



## Unit 5: Kinship

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know the categories of kinship
- Understand the importance of kinship.
- Discuss the features of kinship.

### Introduction

Kinship is a term with various meanings depending upon the context. This article reflects the long-standing use of the term in anthropology, which is usually considered to refer to the web of social relationships that form an important part of the lives of most humans in most societies, although its exact meanings even within this discipline are often debated (see below).

In other disciplines, *kinship* may have a different meaning. In biology, it typically refers to the degree of genetic relatedness or coefficient of relationship between individual members of a species. It may also be used in this specific sense when applied to human relationships, in which case its meaning is closer to consanguinity or genealogy.

In a more general sense, *kinship* may refer to a similarity or affinity between entities on the basis of some or all of their characteristics that are under focus. This may be due to a shared ontological origin, a shared historical or cultural connection, or some other perceived shared features that connect the two entities. For example, a person studying the ontological roots of human languages (etymology) might ask whether there is kinship between the English word *seven* and the German word *sieben*. It can be used in a more diffuse sense as in, for example, the news headline “Madonna feels kinship with vilified Wallis Simpson”, to imply a felt similarity or empathy between two or more entities.

This article is focused on the anthropological sense of the word *kinship*, its referents and how these have been studied, theorized about and understood within the discipline. Within anthropology, *kinship* can refer both to *the study of* the patterns of social relationships in one or more human cultures, or it can refer to *the patterns of social relationships* themselves. Further, even within these two broad usages of the term, there are different approaches, which are covered below. Over its history, anthropology has developed a number of related concepts and terms, such as **descent**, **descent groups**, **lineages**, **affines**, **cognates** and even **fictive kinship** and these are treated in their own subsections here, or in linked articles.

Broadly, kinship patterns may be considered to include people related both by descent (one’s social relations during development), and also relatives by marriage. Human kinship relations through marriage are commonly called “affinity” in contrast to the relationships that arise in one’s group of

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origin, which may be called one's "descent group". In some cultures, kinship relationships may be considered to extend out to people an individual has economic relationships with, or other forms of social connections. Within a culture, the descent groups may be considered to lead back to gods, or animal ancestors totems. This may be conceived of on a more or less literal basis.

*Kinship* can also refer to a perceived universal principle or category of humans, by which we or our societies organize individuals or groups of individuals into social groups, roles, categories, and genealogy. Family relations can be represented concretely (mother, brother, grandfather) or abstractly after degrees of relationship. A relationship may have relative purchase (e.g., father is one regarding a child), or reflect an absolute (e.g., status difference between a mother and a childless woman). Degrees of relationship are not identical to heirship or legal succession. Many codes of ethics consider the bond of kinship as creating obligations between the related persons stronger than those between strangers, as in Confucian filial piety.

**The Kinship**

In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father (unless he decides to remain unmarried) and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother (unless she decides to remain spinster) and a daughter and a sister. But due to the incest taboo, a man cannot play the roles of a father and a husband in the same nuclear family in which he is a son and a brother. Similarly, a woman cannot play the roles of a mother and a wife in the same nuclear family in which she is a daughter and a sister. Hence, every adult individual belongs to two nuclear families – the family of orientation in which he was born and reared, and the family of procreation which he establishes by marriage. It is this fact of individual membership in two nuclear families that gives rise to kinship system. By the virtue of the fact that individuals belong to two nuclear families, every person forms a link between the members of his family of orientation and those of his family of procreation. Such links bind individuals to one another through kinship ties.

*Kinship* as such, may be defined as "a social relationship based upon family relatedness" (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969: 221). The nature of relationship which may be consanguineal (based on ties of blood) or affinal (based on marriage) determines the rights and obligations of related persons. A *kin group* may be explained as "a group united by ties of blood or marriage". Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal. *Kinship system* may be considered as "the customary system of statuses and roles that governs the behaviour of people who are related to each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor". It may also be described as "a structured system of relationship in which kin are bound to one another by complex inter-locking ties".

**5.1 Kinship Categories**

There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin. The *primary kin* are those kin who belong to the Ego's nuclear families of orientation and procreation. Thus, father (Fa), mother (Mo), sister (Si), and brother (Br) in one's family of orientation, and husband (Hu), wife (Wi), son (So), and daughter (Da) in one's family of procreation, are one's primary kin. Each of Ego's primary kin will have his/her own primary kin, who will not be primary kin of Ego. These will be called Ego's *secondary kin*. For example FaFa, FaMo, MoFa, MoBr, etc. There are 33 types of secondary kin. The primary kin of the secondary kin are called *tertiary kin*. For example FaFaFa, FaFaBr, etc. There are 151 types of tertiary kin. Lastly, the primary kin of tertiary kin are called *distant kin*. For example FaFaFaFa, FaMoFaFa, etc. Their number is very large.

Kinship relationship is functional in two ways: (i) it characterizes every relationship between kin, and (ii) it determines reciprocal behaviour.

**Kinship Terminology**

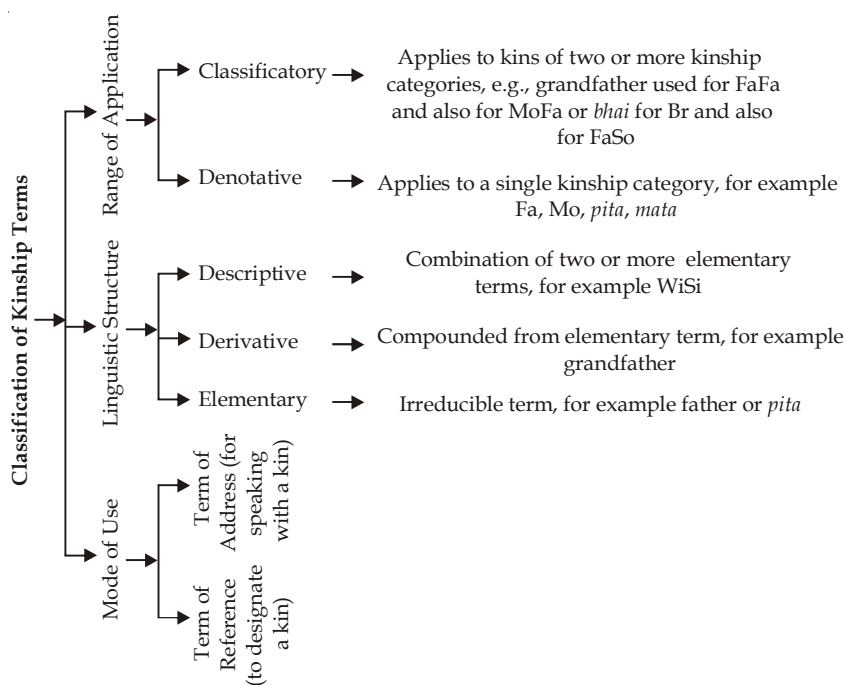
Part of the reciprocal behaviour characterizing every relationship between kin, consists of a verbal element, that is, the terms by which each addresses the other. In some cases, people use personal names, in others they use kinship terms, and in a few cases they employ what Tylor has called 'teknonymy', that is, combination of personal and kinship terms; for example, Ram's father, Asha's mother, and so forth.

Murdock (1949: 97-100) has classified kinship terms on three bases:

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### 1. Mode of Use of Kinship Terms

This refers to the kinship term employed either in direct address (called term of address) or in indirect reference (called term of reference). Some people have distinct set of terms for address and reference, for example, *pita* (term of reference) and *baba* (term of address) for father, or *mata* and *amba* for mother, but others make only grammatical distinctions or none at all. Terms of address tend to reveal more duplication and over-lapping; for example just as in English language the term 'uncle' is used for a number of people (like FaFa, MoBr, father's elderly cousin, and for all elderly persons); similarly in Indian languages, the term *bhai* is used not only for one's own brother but also for cousin and many other persons.



### 2. Linguistic Structure of Kinship Terms

On this basis, kinship terms are distinguished as elementary, derivative and descriptive. Elementary term is one which cannot be reduced to any other term, for example, English terms 'father', 'nephew', etc. or Hindi terms *sali*, *jeth*, *mata*, *pita*, *bhai*, *kaka*, *chacha*, *taoo*, *bahen*, etc. Derivative term is compounded from an elementary term, for example, grandfather, sister-in-law, step-son, or Hindi terms *pitamaha* (FaFa), *prapitamaha* (FaFaFa), *duhitri* (daughter), *mausa* (MoSi Hu), *bahnoi* (SiHu), etc. The descriptive term is one which combines two or more elementary terms to denote a specific relative, for example, wife's sister, brother's wife, sister's husband, or Hindi terms *bhratra-jaya* (BrWi), *arya-putra* (father-in-law), *mauseri-bahen*, (MoSiDa), *phuphera-bhai* (FaSiSo).

### 3. Range of Application of Kinship Terms


On this basis, kinship terms are differentiated as denotative and classificatory. Denotative or isolative term applies only to one kin as defined by generation, sex and geneological connection, for example, father, mother, brother, sister, or Hindi terms *pati*, *patni*, *bhai*, *bahen*, etc. The classificatory term applies to persons of two or more kinship categories, for example, grandfather (used both for father's father as well as mother's father), cousin (used for father's brother's son as well as mother's sister's son), brother-in-law (used for sister's husband as well as wife's brother). It is through the liberal use of classificatory terms that all societies reduce the number of kinship categories from the thousands to a very modest number. A classificatory term arises only by

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ignoring one or more fundamental criteria of distinction between kins, for example, criterion of sex (cousin refers to both male and female), generation (*bhai* ignores ego's own generation as well as first ascending or descending generation), affinity (whether kin related through blood or marriage), collaterality (consanguineal relative of same generation, for example, brother and cousin), bifurcation (whether kin is secondary, tertiary or distant, for example, *pitamaha*), age (whether younger or older for example, *bhai*) and decedence (whether alive or dead).

### 5.2 Importance of Kinship

After the family, kinship group plays a very crucial role in the daily life, rituals and social ceremonies of Hindus. People turn to their kin not only for help in exigencies of life but even on regular occasions too. The kinship group may consist of four to five families or as many as twenty-five to thirty families. The important kinship groups after the family are *vansh* (lineage) and *gotra* (clan).



*Did u know?* Lineage is an extension of family. It is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from a known (and real) common ancestor.

A lineage is based on more precise and specific genealogy. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal. It is an exogamous unit.

The lineage members are treated as brothers and have fraternal allegiance to each other. Lineage ties lapse after several generations but the number of obligated generations is not usually specified clearly. The lineage fellows who live in the same neighbourhood or same village exchange economic aid, pool labour at harvest, help in dispute settlements, and co-operate with each other almost on all important occasions.

A main link among the families of a lineage is common participation in ritual functions. They participate together in each other's life-cycle observances like birth, death, etc. They worship the same deities and follow the same restrictions. Lineage fellows also co-operate for economic purposes. When the British came to power in the eighteenth century, they too made the headman of the lineage responsible for land revenue and maintenance of the order. In the nineteenth century, the system of land tenure changed which impaired the power of the ruling lineages. Today, the lineage relations continue to be important and powerful.

The *vansh* (lineage) passes into *gotra* (clan) which is also a unilateral kin group but is larger than the lineage. It has a mythical ancestor and is exogamous. Each person inherits the *gotra* of his father. According to T.N. Madan (1965: 225), the separation of a lineage is usually a gradual process and comes about through the slow, piecemeal relinquishing of mutual exchanging – sometimes under protest and sometimes mutually accepted – rather than in an abrupt, explosive break. The exogamous principle is, however, not relinquished, even after abandoning lineage co-operation.



*Task* What do you mean by Tertiary kins?

When lineage relations are limited in time and space, the *gotra* relations endure through time and across space. The members of a *gotra* usually have an origin story linking all of them to the same supernatural or mythical source. Co-operation within the *gotra* depends on economic factors as well as distance in place of residence. Today, the functions of *gotra* are minimal. Its chief function now is to regulate marriage.

Man's relations with his feminal kin, that is, kin related through his mother, his married sisters, his wife and his married daughters, are equally important in his life. The exchange of gifts, periodic

visits, reciprocal support in personal emergencies, and regular communication strengthen their relations with each other. Mother's brother has many obligations to perform for his nieces and nephews on different occasions. The feminal kinsmen, broadly speaking, are more concerned with the individual and his problems as a person than as a member of a group. It may, therefore, be said that feminal relationships help to integrate each person and each village into a social network of villages that affect many aspects of village life. William Rowe (1960) also found in his study of a village near Banaras (present Varanasi) in Uttar Pradesh in 1959 that the feminal kin exchange labour, borrow farm equipment, animals and cash from each other. When a person gets in trouble in his home village, he flees for refuge to his mother's brother's or to his wife's brother's village. Cohn (1955: 57-58) also found in his village study that feminal kin cherish kinship ties in many ways.

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### 5.3 Features of Kinship

#### Features of Kinship in North and Central India

Iravati Karve discussed the kinship features of Indian society in 1930s, 1940s and 1950s by dividing the country in four zones—northern, southern, central and eastern—on the basis of differences in languages spoken, that is, Sanskrit, Indo-Aryan languages (spoken in northern and central zones), Dravidian languages (spoken in southern zone) and Austric or Mundari languages (spoken in eastern zone). The difference between the northern and the central zones was made in terms of plain and hilly regions. In terms of present reorganized states, the northern zone consisted of eight states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Punjab, Haryana, Kashmir, and Meghalaya), the central zone consisted of six states (Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Orissa), the southern zone consisted of four states (Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu), and the eastern zone consisted of two states (Nagaland, Mizoram) and parts of Bihar, Bengal, Assam and Orissa.

Though kinship behaviour in the northern zone changes slightly from region to region and within each region from caste to caste, yet the comparative study shows that it is possible to talk of an 'ideal' northern pattern referring to the practices and attitudes found mostly common among a majority of the castes.

The important features of kinship organization of the northern zone are: (1) Kins junior to Ego (person under reference) are addressed by their personal names and senior to Ego by the kinship term. (2) All children in ascending and descending generations are equated with one's own sibling group (brothers and sisters) and all children of one's sibling group are again equated with one's own children. (3) The principle of unity of generations is observed (for example great-grandfather and grandfather are given same respect as father). (4) Within the same generation, the older and the younger kin are kept distinct. (5) The duties and behaviour patterns of the members of three generations are strictly regulated. (6) Some of the ancient kinship terms having Sanskrit origin have been replaced by new terms; for example *pitamaha* is replaced by *pita*. Suffix 'ji' is added to kinship terms used for kin older than the speaker (for example *chachaji*, *tauji*, etc.). In Bengal, instead of 'ji', suffix 'moshai' is added. (7) Marriage among close kin is not permitted. (8) After the marriage, a girl is not expected to be free with her parents-in-law, but when she becomes a mother, she achieves the position of respect and power and restrictions on her are lessened. (9) The family is so structured that children, parents and grand-parents either live together or social kinship obligations toward them are clearly met. (10) Apart from the joint family which represents a person's intimate and nearest circle of relations, there is always a larger circle of kin who play a part in his life. This kindred represents the circle of his *patri*-kin or *matri*-kin who may stand by him and help him when the immediate family no longer suffices.

The salient features of kinship organization of Central India are not much different from those of North India. The important features of kinship in Central India are: (1) Every region follows northern practices of marriage, that is, consanguinity is the main consideration which rules marriage. (2) Many castes are divided into exogamous clans. Among some castes, the exogamous clans are arranged in hypergamous hierarchy. (3) The kinship terminology shows intimacy and closeness between various kins. The relations between kins are governed by the custom of "neota-gifts", according to which



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cash-gift is given equivalent to cash gift received. The *neota*-registers are maintained and preserved for generations. (4) In Gujarat, mamera-type of cousin marriage (with mother’s brother) and levirate (marriage with husband’s brother) are practised by some castes. (5) The custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages as well as unequal marriages. But such marriages are practised in modern India too. (6) In Maharashtra, there is impact of both northern and southern zones in kinship relations. For example the clan organization of the Marathas is similar to that of the Rajputs, but the clans are arranged in a manner of concentric circles unlike those of Rajputs which are arranged in a ladder manner. Clans are grouped into divisions and each division is named according to the number of clans it comprises; for example *panch-kuli*, *sat-kuli*, etc. The clans are arranged in hypergamous order, the highest being the *panch-kuli*, followed by the *sat-kuli*, etc. The *panch-kuli* can marry among themselves or can take a girl from the *sat-kuli*, etc. but do not give their daughters outside the *panch-kuli*. (7) Some castes like Marathas and Kunbis in the central zone practice bride-price too, though the dowry custom also exists among them. (8) Though the family system in Maharashtra is patrilineal and patrilocal, but unlike the north where a wife permanently stays with her husband after *gauna* and rarely goes to her father’s house, in castes like Marathas, she moves to and from her father’s house very frequently. Once she goes to her father’s house, it is difficult to get her back to her husband’s house. This shows the impact of the south on relations with kins. (9) Though the kinship terms are mostly northern but some terms are borrowed from the Dravidians in the south, for example, use of the term *anna* and *nana* for brother along with the term *dada*. Similarly, use of the term *akka*, *tai* and *mai* for sister. (10) The kinship system of the tribals in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh is somewhat different from that of the caste Hindus. The difference exists in terms of kinship terminology, marriage rules, inheritance system, and the clan obligations.

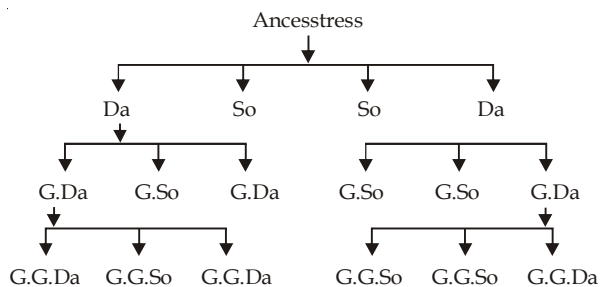
Thus, it may be stated that though the kinship organization in the northern and central zones is almost similar, yet it can be described as a region of transition from the north to the south. State like Maharashtra is a region of cultural borrowings and cultural synthesis (Karve, 1953: 174).

**Kinship Structure in South India**

The southern zone presents a complicated pattern of kinship system. Though patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type for the greater number of castes and communities (for example, Namboodris), there are important sections of population which are matrilineal and matrilocal (for example, Nayars), and also a quite number whose systems possess features of both patrilineal and matrilineal organizations (for example, Todas). Similarly, there are some castes/tribes who practise only polygyny (for example, Namboodris) and there are others who practise only polyandry (for example, Asari, Nayars) and yet others, who practise both polygyny and polyandry (for example, Todas). Then there are polyandrous patrilineal groups (for example, Asari) and also polyandrous matrilineal groups (for example, Tiyan, Nayars) and polygynous patrilineal groups (for example, Namboodris) but no polygynous matrilineal groups. Similarly, there are patrilineal joint families and also matrilineal joint families. All this shows varied patterns in kinship organization in southern zone. Let us examine some of these organizations/patterns.

**Matrilineal Family**

How is matrilineal family organized?



In the example of a matrilineal family, what is the kinship relationship of women to one another? It is that of a daughter, mother, sister, mother's mother, mother's sister, and sister's daughter. What is the kinship relationship of women with men? Males are related to women as brother, son, daughter's son, and sister's son. What is the kinship relationship of males to one another? It is that of brother, mother's brother and sister's son. All these kinship relations are based on blood. There are no relations by marriage. This is because husband visits the family occasionally. We, therefore, find: (i) absence of companionship between husband and wife and between father and children; and (ii) there is complete independence of women as regards their livelihood from the earnings of their husband is concerned. This is how some southern families differ from the northern families.

### Matrilineal Joint Family

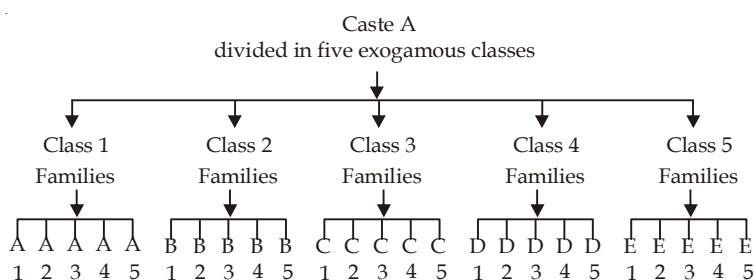
Matrilineal joint family, called *Tarwad*, is found amongst the Nairs at Malabar in Travancore and a few other groups. The important characteristics of *Tarwad* are: (1) the property of *Tarwad* is the property of all males and females belonging to it. (2) Unmarried sons belong to mother's *Tarwad* but married sons belong to their wife's *Tarwad*. (3) Manager of *Tarwad* property is oldest male member in the family, called *Karnavan* (his wife is called *Ammayi*). (4) *Karnavan* is an absolute ruler in the family. On his death, the next senior male member becomes *Karnavan*. He can invest money in his own name, can mortgage property, can give money on loan, can give land as gift, and is not accountable to any member in respect of income and expenditure. (5) When *Tarwad* becomes too large and unwieldy, it is divided into *Tavazhis*. A *Tavazhi* in relation to a woman is "a group of persons consisting of a female, her children, and all her descendents in the female line".

*Tarwad* before and after 1912 are two different things: (a) before 1912, *Tarwad* property was indivisible, but now it can be divided; (b) before 1912, *Karnavan* was the absolute ruler of *Tarwad*, but now his authority has become limited; (c) before 1912, members of *Tarwad* were not entitled to maintenance unless they lived in the family house, but now members have become entitled to maintenance outside the ancestral house; (d) before 1912, ancestor worship of *Karnavan* was common, but now it is no longer common; (e) before 1912, relations between husband and wife were formal, but now the relations have become informal and personal and more close and intimate; (f) before 1912, the self-acquired property of a member of a *Tarwad* went to *Tarwad* after his death, but now it goes to his widow and children, and in their absence to mother and mother's mother.

Thus, *Tarwad* of Nairs has now disintegrated after the enactments of 1912 Act (Travancore), 1920 Act (Cochin), 1933 Act (Madras), and 1958 Act (Kerala). Woman's property now goes to her sons and daughters and then to her father and husband. Kapadia (1947: 348) has also written that the fact that more than 90 per cent of *veedus* (houses) have only one *Tavazhi* shows the extent of atomization of *Tarwads* in the last few decades.

### Clan Organization and Marriage Rules

How are clans of a caste organized and what are the rules of marriage obligations?

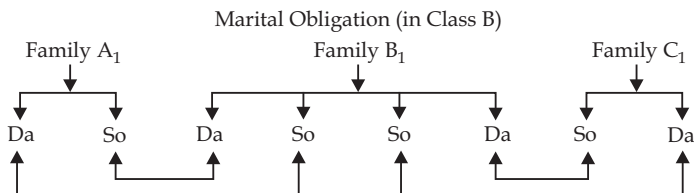


The important characteristics of clan organization are:

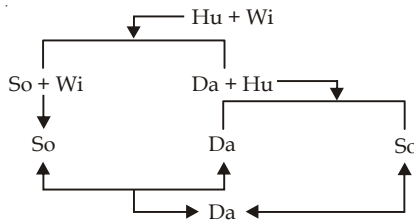
1. Each clan (composed of a number of families) possesses a name of some animal or a plant or some other object.
2. A person from one clan can seek a spouse from any other clan except his own. However, this choice is theoretical because of the rule of exchange of daughters.

Notes

- In marriage, there is not only the rule of clan exogamy but also of family exchange of daughters. Thus, a man belonging to family 'B' of clan 'B' will seek daughter only from families A<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>1</sub> of clans 'A' and 'C' and from clans 'D' and 'E'. This rule makes the field of selection limited.

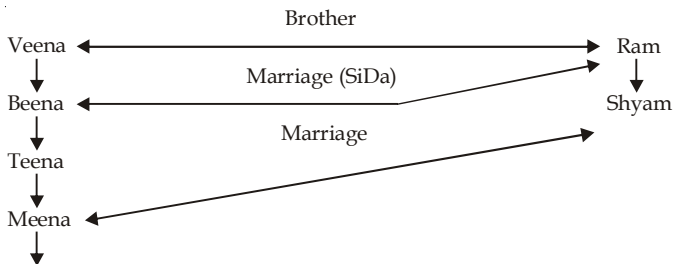


- Because of the marriage rule of exchange of daughters, many kinship terms are common. For example the term used for *nanad* (HuSi) is also used for *bhabhi* (BrWi); the term used for *sala* (WiBr) is also used for *bahnnoi* (SiHu); the term used for *sasur* (HuFa) is also used for *bhabhi's father* (BrWiFa).
- Marriage between maternal parallel cousins, that is, between children of two sisters, is not permissible.
- Sororate marriage (that is, marriage with wife's younger sister) is practised. Also, two sisters can marry two brothers in one family.
- There is a system of preferential mating in the south. In a large number of castes, the first preference is given to elder sister's daughter, second preference to father's sister's daughter, and third preference to mother's brother's daughter. This is shown in the diagram below:



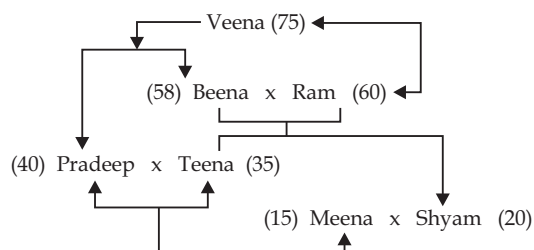
However, today cross-cousin marriage and specially the uncleniece marriage is beginning to be considered as outmoded and a thing to be ashamed of among those groups which have come in contact with the northern Indians or with western culture.

- The taboos prescribed for marriage are: a man cannot marry his younger sister's daughter; a widow cannot marry her husband's elder or younger brother (that is, levirate is a taboo); and a man cannot marry his mother's sister's daughter.
- Marriage is dependent on the chronological age differences rather than the principle of generational divisions as in the north. One example is that the marriage of grandfather and granddaughter is possible in south as shown in the following example:



In the above diagram, Meena is a great granddaughter of Veena and also of Ram. Meena marries Shyam who will be her great grandfather's son, that is, grandfather. This is how marriage between grandfather and granddaughter is possible.

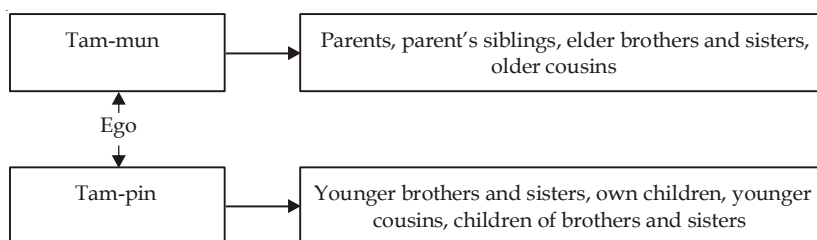
## Notes



10. Yet, another feature of marriage and kinship in the south is that marriage is not arranged with a view to widen a kin group but each marriage strengthens already existing bonds and makes doubly near those people who were already very near kins.
11. A girl has to marry a person who belongs to the groups older than her, that is, *tam-mun*, and also to the group younger than parents, that is, she can marry any of her older cross-cousins. A boy must marry in a *tam-pin* group and who is a child of a group of *tam-mun*.
12. The dichotomy of status and sentiments expressed in such northern terms like *kanya* (unmarried girl), *bahu* (married girl), *pihar* (mother's house) and *sasural* (husband's house) are absent in south. This is because in south, a girl after marriage does not enter the house of strangers as in north. One's husband is one's mother's brother's son and so on. Marriage in the south, thus, does not symbolize separation from father's house for a girl. A girl moves freely in her father-in-law's house.

### Comparison of Kinship System of North and South India

1. In southern family, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth (that is, family of orientation) and family of marriage (that is, family of procreation) as found in the northern family. In north, no member from Ego's family of orientation (that is, of father, mother, brother and sister) can also become a member of his family of marriage, but this is possible in the south.
2. In the north, every kinship term clearly indicates whether the person referred to is a blood relation or an affinal kin but this is not so in the south.
3. In the south, an Ego (person under reference/study) has some kin who are his blood relatives only and others who are his blood relatives and affinal kin at the same time.
4. In the south, organization of kin is arranged according to age categories in the two groups, that is, older than Ego (*tam-mun*) and younger than Ego (*tam-pin*) (*tam* is 'self', *mun* is 'before' and *pin* is 'after').



In the north, kin are organized according to the nature of relationship.

5. In the south, kinship organization is dependent on the chronological age differences while in the north, it is dependent on the principle of generational divisions.
6. No special norms of behaviour are evolved for the married girls in the south whereas in the north, many restrictions are imposed on them.
7. Marriage does not symbolize woman's separation from father's house in the south but in north, a woman becomes a casual visitor to her parents' family.

Notes

8. In the north, marriage is to widen the kinship group while in the south it is to strengthen already existing bonds.

### Kinship Organization in Eastern India

There are more tribes than caste Hindus in eastern India (consisting of parts of Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Orissa). The important tribes are: Khasi, Birhor, Hos, Mundas and Uraon. The kinship organization here has no one pattern. People speaking Mundari languages have patrilineal, patrilocal families. However, joint families are rare in this zone. Cross-cousin marriages are practised seldomly though bride-price is common. Woman is addressed as *dual* (you two), referred to as *dual* (she, the two) and speaks as *dual* (1, two). Kinship terminology is borrowed both from Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. Khasis and Garos have matrilineal joint family system (like Nairs in the south). After marriage, a man rarely lives with his parents and establishes a separate house.

### Resume

It may be concluded that the kinship organization in India is influenced by caste and language. In this age of sharp competition for status and livelihood, a man and his family must have kin as allies. The caste and the linguistic groups may help the individual from time to time but his most staunch, trustworthy and loyal supporters could only be his nearest kins. It is, therefore, necessary that a person must not only strengthen his bonds with kin but should also try to enlarge his circle of kins. Cousin marriages, preferential mating, exchange rules and the marriage norms which circumvent the field of mate selection need to be changed so that kinship relations through marriage may be extended and a person is able to get their help in seeking power and the status-lift that power can bring.

### Self-Assessment

1. Fill in the blanks:

- (i) Matrilineal joint family is called .....
- (ii) Karnawan is an absolute ruler in the family, his wife is called .....
- (iii) Pihar is .....
- (iv) There are ..... types of tertiary kin.
- (v) Denotive applies to a ..... kinship categories.

### 5.4 Summary

- “A social relationship based upon family relatedness” (Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969: 221). The nature of relationship which may be consanguineal (based on ties of blood) or affinal (based on marriage) determines the rights and obligations of related persons. A *kin group* may be explained as “a group united by ties of blood or marriage”. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal. *Kinship system* may be considered as “the customary system of statuses and roles that governs the behaviour of people who are related to each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor” (Theodorson, *Ibid*: 221).
- Lineage is an extension of family. It is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from a known (and real) common ancestor.
- A lineage is based on more precise and specific genealogy. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal. It is an exogamous unit.
- When lineage relations are limited in time and space, the *gotra* relations endure through time and across space. The members of a *gotra* usually have an origin story linking all of them to the same supernatural or mythical source. Co-operation within the *gotra* depends on economic factors as well as distance in place of residence. Today, the functions of *gotra* are minimal. Its chief function now is to regulate marriage.



- All children in ascending and descending generations are equated with one's own sibling group (brothers and sisters) and all children of one's sibling group are again equated with one's own children.
- The kinship terminology shows intimacy and closeness between various kins. The relations between kins are governed by the custom of "neota-gifts", according to which cash-gift is given equivalent to cash gift received. The *neota*-registers are maintained and preserved for generations. The custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages as well as unequal marriages. But such marriages are practised in modern India too. Clans are grouped into divisions and each division is named according to the number of clans it comprises; for example *panch-kuli*, *sat-kuli*, etc. The clans are arranged in hypergamous order, the highest being the *panch-kuli*, followed by the *sat-kuli*, etc. The *panch-kuli* can marry among themselves or can take a girl from the *sat-kuli*, etc. but do not give their daughters outside the *panch-kuli*. The kinship system of the tribals in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh is somewhat different from that of the caste Hindus. The difference exists in terms of kinship terminology, marriage rules, inheritance system, and the clan obligations.
- The southern zone presents a complicated pattern of kinship system. Though patrilineal and patrilocal family is the dominant family type for the greater number of castes and communities.
- Matrilineal joint family, called *Tarwad*, is found amongst the Nairs at Malabar in Travancore and a few other groups.
- *Tarwad* of Nairs has now disintegrated after the enactments of 1912 Act (Travancore), 1920 Act (Cochin), 1933 Act (Madras), and 1958 Act (Kerala). Woman's property now goes to her sons and daughters and then to her father and husband.
- Today cross-cousin marriage and specially the uncleniece marriage is beginning to be considered as outmoded and a thing to be ashamed of among those groups which have come in contact with the northern Indians on with western culture.
- Marriage is dependent on the chronological age differences rather than the principle of generational divisions as in the north.
- The dichotomy of status and sentiments expressed in such northern terms like *kanya* (unmarried girl), *bahu* (married girl), *pihar* (mother's house) and *sasural* (husband's house) are absent in south.
- In the south, kinship organization is dependent on the chronological age differences while in the north, it is dependent on the principle of generational divisions.
- Marriage does not symbolize woman's separation from father's house in the south but in north, a woman becomes a casual visitor to her parents' family.
- In this age of sharp competition for status and livelihood, a man and his family must have kin as allies. The caste and the linguistic groups may help the individual from time to time but his most staunch, trustworthy and loyal supporters could only be his nearest kins.

### 5.5 Key-Words

1. Duhitr : Daughter
2. Mosida : Mauseri-bahen
3. Lineage : Vansh
4. Clan : Gotra

### 5.6 Review Questions

1. What is meant by the term Kinship?

**Notes**

2. Discuss the importance of Kinship.
3. What are the features of Kinship? Discuss.
4. Explain the various categories of Kinship.

**Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) Tarwad (ii) Ammayi (iii) Mother's house  
(iv) 151 (v) Single

**5.7 Further Readings**



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 6: Caste System in India

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- 6.5 Dominant Caste
- 6.6 Inter-Caste and Intra-Caste Relations
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- 6.9 Review Questions
- 6.10 Further Readings

### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know what is caste system.
- Discuss structural and cultural concept of caste.
- Understand the characteristics of caste.
- Assess dominant caste.

### Introduction

The caste system in India has been studied with three perspectives: Indological, socio-anthropological and sociological. The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view, social anthropologists from the cultural point of view, and sociologists from the stratificational point of view.

In the Indo-religious perspective, the Indologists take their cue from the scriptures about the origin, purpose and future of the caste system. They maintain that *varnas* have originated from Brahma – the *virat purusa* – and castes are the fissioned units within the *varna* system developed as the result of hypergamy and hypogamy practices. These units, or *jatis*, received their ranks relative to one another in the *varna* order. The rituals to be performed by the four *varnas* are status-bound and prescribed in the *Brahmanas* (written in about 800 B.C.), while the customs and the laws to be followed by each caste are prescribed in the *Smritis* (written in about 200-100 B.C.). The regional, linguistic, ethnic and sectarian variations have gradually come to affect the ordering of *jati* relationships. The object of the origin of castes, according to them (Indologists), was the division of labour. As people came to accept the general ideology of the division of society into four groups (or say, classes or orders), they became more and more rigid, and membership, occupation, etc., became hereditary. The Brahmins were given the superior position in the social system because of the belief in the divine right of Brahmins to interpret and administer the laws. The rigidity in the caste system is, thus, the result of beliefs in *karma* (deeds) and *dharma* (duties and obligations), which means that the motive force for the caste dogmas was definitely religious. Referring to the future of castes, the Indologists maintain that since they are divine, they will continue to exist.

The cultural perspective of the social anthropologists like Hutton, Risley, Hoebel, Kroeber, etc. ramifies itself in four directions: organizational, structural, institutional, and relational (Verma, 1972). The

## Notes

organizational and the structural approaches of Hutton, etc., consider caste as a unique system found in India alone. The difference between the two (organizational and structural) approaches is that when the former concentrates on the origin of the caste system, the latter focuses its attention on the development and the processes of change in the structure of the caste system. The institutional approach of scholars like Kroeber, Risley, etc. does not view the caste system as relevant only to India; they find it in ancient Egypt, medieval Europe and present southern United States, etc. The relational approach finds caste situations in army, business management, factory, and so forth and views the presence or absence of the caste system in a society as related to the presence or absence of mobility in the groups. If mobility is normal, we do not find the caste system, but if it is barred, we find the caste system.

The sociological perspective views the caste system in terms of social stratification in a society, and as a phenomenon of social inequality. According to it, society has certain structural aspects and it distributes its members in social positions. The interaction is the basis of social structures, and types of interaction along with associated norms categorize social structures.

Though we have referred here to three different perspectives in the study of the caste system but this does not mean that sociologists are not interested in the origin and the development of the caste system as Indologists and social anthropologists are, or that the social anthropologists do not accept caste as a phenomenon resultant of social stratification as the sociologists do. Both sociologists and social anthropologists study the external (relations of one caste with other castes) and internal aspects (relations with members in the same caste) of the caste system and the state of affairs as a result of the existence of the (caste) system through time. Before taking up the sociological analysis of various facets of the caste system, and its origin, it is necessary to understand the concept of caste.

### **6.1 What is the Caste System?**

The caste system in India can be described as an elaborately stratified social hierarchy distinguishing India's social structure from any other nation. Its history is multifaceted and complex. Caste is a term, which is used to specify a group of people having a specific social rank and dates back to 1200 BCE. The Indian term for caste is jati, and generally designates a group that can vary in size from a handful to many thousands. There are thousands of jatis each with its own rules and customs. The various jatis are traditionally arranged in hierarchical order and fit into one of the four basic varnas the (Sanskrit word for "colors").

The varna of Brahmans, commonly identified with priests and the learned class

- The varna of Kshatriyas, associated with rulers and warriors including property owners.
- The varna of Vaishyas, associated with commercial livelihoods (i.e. traders)
- The varna of Shudras, the servile laborers The Untouchables occupy a place that is not clearly defined by boundaries and is outside of the varna scheme. Their jobs (such as toilet cleaning and garbage removal) cause them to be considered impure and thus "untouchable." Historically the untouchables were not allowed in temples and many other public places. In 1950 legislation was passed to prevent any form of discrimination towards the untouchables. Although legislation has affected the status of the people, they are yet very much a visible part of Indian society.

### **Religious Background**

The earliest expressions of caste can be found in one of India's vast bodies of religious scripture known as the Vedas which are thought to have been compiled between 1500 and 1000 BCE, although the time of their composition is under debate. They were transmitted orally for many generations before being written down. Therefore, centuries may have passed before they were ever committed to writing.

These works are considered the source of ancient Indian wisdom. The first of the four basic Vedic books is the Rig Veda; a collection of over 1,000 hymns containing the basic mythology of the Aryan gods. The Rig Veda contains one of the most famous sections in ancient Indian literature in which the first man created, Purusa, is sacrificed in order to give rise to the four varnas.

“The Brahmin was his mouth, his two arms were made the Rajanya [Kshatriya, king and warrior], his two thighs [loins] the Vaishya, from his feet the Sudra [servile class] was born.”

It can be argued that the composers of the Vedas, especially those sections within the Vedas called the Brahmanas, were concerned with the interconnections that organized reality. This way of looking at the varnas allows us to see how such a system can survive several millennia. It classifies people not only in terms of their different qualities but also with respect to their different privileges. Each class thus has a special role to play in society as well as a unique function: this structure is a means of creating and organizing an effective society.

The varna system is inter-linked with creation, lending itself a great deal of reverence and validity. If space, time the congregation of the gods and goddesses, the natural world, scripture and ritual, and the human body itself- if all these realms bear classification according to varna, how could an organization of society be regarded as anything other than the way things should be?

An important thing to note is that the Vedas do NOT mention a concept such as Untouchability. It is a part of the system that has been created by society itself.

### **Society Pre-Colonialism**

Although the nation has a long and varied history, the role of the caste system pre-colonialism can be understood by focusing on the major eras in Indian history. Much of India is rural and that which is not, for the most part, is much more urban, with such a drastic difference in the city and the village there is also a difference in the way caste has been interpreted and implemented over the years.

The early system most represented something analogous to the medieval guild system. It allowed a specialization of society and each member knew their role. Much later in India's history, as India became more and more prevalent in the international scene the concept of the caste system began to have different connotations. It was thought of as backward by much of the west. The greatest changes in the perception as well as in the reality came with the coming and going of the British.

## **6.2 Caste in Modern India**

### **Role of Colonialism in India's Caste System**

British rule in many ways sharpened and expanded the norms and conventions. In many ways the colonists saw the system as a hierarchical and inflexible means of perpetuating a Brahmin centered value system. This insistence played a big role in making the country more caste-conscious. It can be argued that the initiative in this was as much Indian as it was British. It is important, therefore, to understand India's recent international situation. It was then, and continues to be today, in the process of adapting itself to a world that functions very differently from its own infrastructure, namely a Western-dominated global market economy. It is expected that during a period of such profound transition, a nation will do its best to assimilate to the norms set by the world powers of that time. The world power was England and its norms were founded on Western ideals.

In many ways representative government, more so in India than in any other part of England's non-white colonial rule, furthered the development of caste affinities in the political arena. Nevertheless, for both the British and those in India, caste was used as a means to not only bridge many boundaries such as faith, region and economic status but it was also used as a tool to exclude, subjugate and disempower others. This was done in order for certain groups to gain advantage over others using the “divide and conquer” approach. India is a country in which there are hundreds of different cultures and languages: although this characteristic can be used to bring the nation together in pride, it can also be used to gain political and economic advantages. In the colonial quest for monetary exploitation, caste was used to create political allegiances and create obstacles in the path of unity.



## Social Implications of the Caste System in Modern India: How Perceptions have Changed



What does it mean in India today for a person to be a part of a caste or subcaste?

In order to get a good idea of the changes in the perceptions about caste, we have to go back to the period right before independence. Immediately preceding independence caste became a subject of debate and more than one view emerged about its importance in society. There were many, however here I will discuss the main two. The first was the view of the colonial administrator that stated that caste was thriving institution in India and it permeated almost every part of Indian life: thus making it indispensable. The opposing view, held by many Indian intellectuals, was that that caste was largely exaggerated by the colonial administration and that it was most certainly on its way out of the system. They argued that the decline would be greatly expedited by India's independence. These arguments were greatly influenced by the nationalist and colonialist attitudes that were prevalent at this stage in Indian history. For the Indian intellectual it had become a matter of pride to dispute the colonial view that caste was a distinct downfall of Indian culture. Thus began the "modern era."

Today if you asked a person who lives in the city what caste means to them, you would get a very different response than that of a person who lives in a village. It can be argued that in India's emerging middle class, consisting of about 50-75 million people, many would say that there is no longer such a thing as caste. However, it soon becomes evident that though in many respects caste is diminishing, in many others it is still an important part of Indian society. In the villages especially, caste dictates marriage, rituals concerning birth and death as well as occupation which all in turn have a large role in economic status. In this way the impact is tremendous although subtle and varied.

### Role of Caste in Marriage

In 1963 C.T Kannan did a full length study on intercaste marriage. He states:

"Just 25 years ago the instances of intercaste marriage were very few; and those individuals who dared to marry outside the caste had to undergo truly great hardships. Today the situation is altogether different. Not only has the prevalence of intercaste marriage become considerable, but even the difficulties the intercaste couples have to face have become comparatively quite mild" (Kannan, 1963).

Kannan did a study of 200 intercaste marriages (and 50 inter-community marriages), therefore, his study cannot provide us with any real statistical data. There are also other drawbacks to his examination. He does not necessarily examine the tremendous amount of variation that can make one intercaste marriage very different from another. For example, a marriage between two different Brahman subcastes is very different than one between someone from a Brahman background and someone who has a Shudra background.

Nevertheless, Kannan's overall assessment does in many respects capture the trend in India to remove the once extraordinarily stringent rules of marriage. Though by no means has the concept of caste marriage been eradicated, its force is often times much less prevalent than it once was.

### 6.3 Structural and Cultural Concepts of Caste

Caste can be viewed both as a unit and as a system. It can also be looked upon as a structural phenomenon as well as a cultural phenomenon. As a unit, caste can be defined as a 'closed rank status group', that is, a group in which the status of the members, their occupation, the field of mate-selection, and interaction with others is fixed. As a system, it refers to interrelated statuses and patterned in-teraction among castes in terms of collectivity of restrictions, namely, restrictions on change of membership, occupation, marriage, and commensal relations. In viewing caste as a system, there is a presupposition that no caste can exist in isolation and that each caste is closely involved with other castes in the network of economic, political, and ritual relationships. The 'closed-rank

group' feature of caste also explains its structure. As a cultural phenomenon, caste may be viewed as a "set of values, beliefs and practices". Most of the scholars have viewed caste as a solidarity and not as a set of values and attitudes.

Bougie (1958: 9) has explained castes as "hereditarily specialized and hierarchically arranged groups". He has given three characteristics of the caste system—hierarchy, hereditary specialization, and repulsion. Explaining the last characteristic, he claims that different castes repel rather than attract each other. Repulsion is manifested in endogamy, commensal restriction, and contact. This is, however, not true. We cannot and do not find repulsion among castes because they need each other.

Kroeber (1939: 254) defines caste as "an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such sub divisions". According to him, castes are special forms of social classes which, in tendency at least, are present in every society. Kroeber's notion of caste, thus, can be related to the functional theory of stratification prevailing in sociology today. Kathleen Gough (cf. Leach, 1960: 11) views castes as "ranked birth-status groups which are usually endogamous and tend to be associated with an occupation". Senart (1930) has described caste as "a closed corporation, rigorously hereditary, bound with others (castes) by common occupation and equipped with a council that rules its members by the sanction of certain penalties". Though this is not the wrong description of a caste but the use of the word 'close corporation' is questionable here. Besides, all castes do not have councils.

Bailey (1960) and Srinivas (1962) have avoided the problem of definition of caste. They view castes as structures. Ketkar, Dutt, and Opler also instead of defining caste have given the inductive characteristics of the caste system. According to Ketkar (1909: 15), caste is a social group having two characteristics of hereditary membership and endogamy. Hutton (1963: 48) has criticized Ketkar's definition. According to him, there are a number of castes, particularly in South India, which recruit members from other castes. To support this fact, he gives the examples of Ambalavasi caste (of temple servants) in Malabar in South India and Shagird Pasha (domestic servants), Chasa (cultivators) and Karan (writers) castes in Orissa. But Hutton's examples are the exceptional cases and cannot be accepted for criticizing any definition. Hutton, however, feels that the description of caste as given by N.K. Dutt is normally an accurate description applicable to India as a whole. Dutt (1931: 3-4) has referred to the restrictions on marriage, eating and drinking, occupation, change in hereditary membership, and the hierarchical gradation of castes. Opler Morris (1950: 284) also believes that a short definition of caste is not satisfactory; so it is more illuminating to talk in terms of the characteristics of caste. He states: "Caste is hereditary and endogamous. It regulates social intercourse, is graded in rank, and has an assembly or a governing body which regulates its internal affairs." Ghurye (1957: 2-19) has also given similar features of the caste system. Besides referring to hereditary membership, caste councils, hierarchy, and endogamy as the important features of the caste system, he also refers to the restrictions on feeding and social intercourse, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and civil and religious disabilities.

All these scholars, thus, view caste system as composed of solidarities. Their perception is influenced either by the philosophical theories of civilization (as in the case of Ketkar and Dutt), or by the anthropological theories of culture (as in the case of Kroeber and Risley), or by the sociological theories of society (as in the case of Bougie and Ghurye).

### **Caste, Varna, Sub-Caste and Tribe**

Many people confuse caste with *varna*, sub-caste and tribe. The interchange ability of these terms has created confusion in the sociological analysis of the institution of caste. Referring to this conceptual confusion, S.C. Dube (1958: vi) writes that the analytical short-cuts often blur the distinction between them (that is, terms like *varna*, caste and sub-caste), and the resulting portrayal of the social system does not remain useful for the purposes of meaningful comparison. The absence of common operational definitions and generally agreed upon units of analysis in studies of caste has obscured the understanding of caste as an essential aspect of the social system of Hindu India. Though the need for clarification between these concepts has been pointed out by all scholars, including Ghurye, Srinivas, Dube, Bailey and Mayer, etc., yet nobody has succeeded in pointing out the clear-cut difference in the various concepts. Logically it may be maintained that caste is a developed form of *varna* which

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had started as a class in early India and gradually came to have religious sanctions. It is the accepted religious principles supporting the caste system that distinguish it from the stratification system in America and many other countries based on ascriptive status, endogamy and low-prestige status (for example, of Negroes).

### Caste and Varna

Caste and *varna* are two separate concepts. It was Senart who for the first time brought to the attention of the world the fact that a caste and a *varna* are not identical. The peculiarity of the Hindu theory of social organization is its reference to *Varnashram* organization. Though the *varna* organization and the *ashram* organization are two separate organizations, yet they go together as they refer to the problems of nurture and nature of man. *Ashram* organization refers to the conduct of an individual in the world (nurture) in different stages of his life and *varna* organization refers to the work that an individual would undertake in the society according to his nature. The approach to the study of these two organizations is different. In the *ashram* organization, the problem is approached from the point of view of training or nurture of an individual through four different stages of life (Brahamcharya, Grihastashram, Vanprasth, and Sanyas), whereas in the *varna* organization, the problem is considered from the point of view of an individual's position in relation to group and with reference to his innate nature and his tendencies and dispositions.

In the Rig Veda (written in about 4000 B.C.), only two *varnas* have been mentioned: Aryavarna and Dasa varna. However, in the same Veda, there is a description of the division of society into three orders: *Brahma* (priests), *Kshatra* (warriors) and *Vis* (common people). There is no mention of the fourth order, that is, *Sudras*, though there is a reference to groups despised by the Aryans, like *Ayogyas*, *Chandal* and *Nishad*, etc. These four orders ultimately became four *varnas*. Initially, the Sudras were not considered as untouchables. Srinivas (1962: 63) has also maintained that the people of this fourth order were not untouchables but to this group belonged peasants, labourers and servants. Sudras were employed not only as domestic servants but also as cooks. There was nothing like higher or lower *varna* in the Vedic period. The division of society into four *varna* (or four orders or classes) was based on the division of labour. Brahmins acted as priests, Kshatriyas as rulers and fighters, Vaishyas as traders, and Sudras as a servile class. Each *varna* worshipped different deities and followed different rituals. This difference was because each group had to achieve different object according to its occupational role. Brahmins wanted maximum holy lustre for which they worshipped *agni* (fire) and recited Gayatri *mantras*; Kshatriyas wanted physical strength (*viryam*) for which they worshipped Indra and recited Trishtubh *mantras*; and Vaishyas wanted cattle-wealth (*pasavah*) for which they worshipped Visvedevas and recited Jagati *mantras*. But there were no restrictions on the matrimonial alliances or on the commensal or social relations or even on the change of membership from one to the other *varna*. Later on, however, as we pass from the Vedic (4000-1000 B.C.) to the Brahmanic (230 B.C. to 700 A.D.) period, the four *varnas* came to be arranged hierarchically, with Brahmins at the top and Sudras at the bottom.

According to one viewpoint, this distinction and hierarchichal arrangement had probably something to do with colour difference. *Varna* means 'colour', and it was in this sense that the word seems to have been employed in contrasting the Arya and the Dasa, referring to their fair and dark colours respectively. The colour-connotation of the word was so strong that later on when the clasps came to be regularly described as *varnas*, four different colours were assigned to the four classes, by which their members were supposed to be distinguished. The colour associated with the Brahmin is white, with Kshatriya red, with Vaishya yellow, and with Sudra black. Hutton (1963: 66) believes that it is possible that this colour distinction is in some way associated with race. But according to Hocart (1950: 46), the colour has a ritual and not a racial significance.

Though like the origin of *varnas*, the origin of castes also is explained by scholars like Risley, Ghurye, Majumdar, etc. in terms of the racial factors but it cannot be said taat castes are the sub-divisions of *varnas*. The origin of castes had noting to do with *varnas*, though in the process of development of castes, they came to be associated with *varnas*, and the hierarchy of the castas and the mobility of a caste came to be stated in *varna* terms. *Varna*, thus, provided a framework which conditioned all Indian thinking about and reaction to caste (Hsu, 1963: 96). Srinivas (1962: 69) also suggests that

*varna* has provided a common social language which holds good or is thought to hold good for India as a whole, that is, it has enabled ordinary men and women to grasp the caste system by providing them with a simple and clear scheme which is applicable to all parts of India. He further holds that the importance of the *varna* system consists in that it furnishes an all India frame into which the *jatis*, occupying the lower rungs, have throughout tried to raise their status by taking over the customs and rituals of the top *jatis*. This has helped the spread of a uniform culture throughout the Hindu society.

However, to fit in *jatis* into the Brahmanic and the Sudra groups is easy but to fit them into the middle groups, that is, in the Kshatriya and the Vaishya groups is difficult and confusing because one *jati* in one area may be treated as a Vaishya *jati* but the same *jati* in another area may claim a Kshatriya status. The *varna* model, thus, has been the cause of misinterpretation of the realities of the caste system (Srinivas, 1962: 67). Caste is tied to locality but *varna* functions on an all India basis. Therefore, to understand the caste system clearly and scientifically, it is necessary for a student of sociology to free himself from the hold of the *varna* model. Hsu (1963: 96) also has said that *varna* is a mere conceptual scheme for the Hindu society as a whole, while caste is a description of a real situation in the Hindu society.

### Caste and Sub-caste

It is not easy to give a clear-cut distinction between a caste and a sub-caste because both have similar attributes. However, a sub-caste is a sub-division of a caste. For example, Kayasth is a caste and it is divided into various sub-castes like Mathur, Saxena, Srivastava, Nigam and Bhatnagar. Similarly, Agarwal caste is divided into Dasa and Bisa sub-castes, while Oswal caste is divided into Dhaya, Pancha, Dasa and Bisa sub-castes. The marriage between a Dasa Oswal boy and a Dasa Agarwal girl will thus be an example of an inter-caste marriage. Brahmin is always erroneously designated as a caste, when it is in fact a *varna*, a constellation of many castes. The examples of Kanyakubja, Saryupari and Gaur Brahmins are the examples of castes, and Shrimali, Purohit and Pushkarna Brahmins are the examples of sub-castes, while Bhardwaj, Gautam, and Kashyap Brahmins are the examples of *gotras*. Castes and sub-castes are both endogamous groups but *gotra* is an exogamous group.

How did sub-castes originate? There are two views: one, they have arisen out of a fission from a parent group, and two, they have emerged as independent groups (Chauhan, 1966: 44). According to Ghurye (1957: 34), the sub-castes came to be distinguished from castes due to territorial separateness (for example, Gujarati and Malwi weavers in Madhya Pradesh, or Mewari and Marwari barbers in Rajasthan), mixed origin (for example, Bhilala in Madhya Pradesh having emerged due to mixed origin from the Rajput and Bhil parentage), occupational distinction (for example, Kumhars who work as potters and are called Gadhede, and Kumhars who work on field and are called Kheted), some peculiarity in the technique of the occupation (for example, Mochi subcaste among leather workers who make only new shoes), dissimilarity of custom (for example, relating to widow re-marriage), and due to nick-names.

Iravati Karve (1958: 125) has accepted the view that sub-castes are either the fissioned divisions of castes or they have an independent origin. Referring to this, she has said (1958: 133): "The difference in religious practices and techniques reflects the separate existence and history of these entities than serves as cause for their separation from the larger units." Risley (1915), Hutton (1961: 55) and Majumdar (1958: 357) have referred to sub-castes breaking away from the main castes/tribes to raise their status. B.R. Chauhan (1966: 45) has maintained that the origin of sub-castes due to the process of fission may be explained in terms of mechanisms like migration, change of customs, political decisions, etc. Krickpatrick (1912) has explained that sub-castes, which are the fissioned groups of castes, were earlier formed as the result of migration and political and social factors but today they are the results of attempts by the well-to-do elements in a despised caste to cut adrift from their humbler caste brethren and raise themselves in the social scale by finding a new name and a dubious origin, and associating themselves with some higher caste.

Another question is: What activities belong to the specific fields of caste and sub-caste? The three functions performed by sub-castes are: restricting marriages, restricting commensal relations, and regulating behaviour or communal life in terms of subsisting within the larger society. The three



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functions performed by castes are: assigning status, delimiting civil and religious rights, and determining the occupation.

Referring to these characteristics, Ghurye (1957: 19) has asserted: "We should recognize sub-castes as real castes". A.C. Mayer (1960: 151) has also talked of recognizing the need to distinguish caste from sub-caste. He found Ghurye's reference to caste as meaningful for the society at large and reference to sub-caste as meaningful for the individual. Referring to members within a caste, he maintained that sub-caste is more meaningful to them, while referring to members of other castes, he thought that caste is the key-point of cognition. He, thus, has opined that caste and sub-caste can co-exist, neither being more real than the other.

There has been some difference of opinion among the scholars regarding the unit of the caste system. According to some, it is caste and according to others it is sub-caste. Srinivas (1952: 24), for instance, believes that sub-caste is the 'real' unit of the caste system. But, in his own study of Rampura village (in Mysore), he confined himself to the study of caste. According to Mayer (1960: 8): "At the level of the regional study, a sub-caste may be the unit of inter-caste as well as intra-caste relations, though within the village, inter-caste relations can be seen in terms of castes rather than sub-castes." Irvati Karve (1938: 33) considers sub-castes as 'ultimate units' of analysis. Ghurye (1950: 20) maintains that stated generally, though it is the caste that is recognized by the society at large, it is the sub-caste that is regarded important by the particular caste and individuals. We should, therefore, recognize sub-castes as real castes to get a sociologically correct idea of the institution of caste. According to Stevenson (1954), however, because of the confusion between the concepts of caste and sub-caste, the best thing is to ignore the difference between the two. But as already stated, instead of completely forgetting the difference between the two concepts, we should treat a group as a sub-caste in the sociological literature only if it preserves its link with the parental caste, otherwise we should treat each endogamous group as a separate entity, that is, a caste. Max Weber (1960: 31) also holds: "Today one caste frequently contains several hundred sub-castes. In such cases, these sub-castes may be related to one another exactly or almost exactly as are different castes. If this is the case, sub-castes in reality are castes; the caste name common to all of them has merely historical significance".

## Caste and Tribe

There is no single and accepted criterion by which to distinguish a tribe from a caste. Andre Beteille (1977: 7) has claimed that the concept of 'tribe' can be understood clearly not on the basis of its existing definitions but by finding out the attributes and analyzing the specific conditions in India which are distinctive of groups conventionally regarded as tribes. For example, social anthropologists like Nadel have described tribe as "a society with a political, a linguistic, and a cultural boundary." This means that a tribe is a society the members of which have a common government, share common language, and hold a common culture or beliefs and practices. Though many tribal societies have a clear cultural and linguistic boundaries, if not the political one, but there are several tribal societies which lack government and the centralized authority in the ordinary sense of the term. Likewise, cultural homogeneity in a tribe is also elusive because in this age no iron wall exists where one 'culture' comes to an end and another begins. A common dialect, however, is possessed by the tribes. The prevalent definition of tribe is, therefore, inadequate.

Scholars like Ghurye, Naik, Bailey and Verrier Elwin, etc. have used different criteria for distinguishing between caste and tribe. Some of these criteria used are: religion, geographical isolation, language, economic backwardness, and political organization.

It is said that the religion of the tribal people is Animism and that of the caste people is Hinduism. Hutton (1963) and Bailey (1960: 263) believe that tribal people are not Hindus but are animists. The basic tenets of Animism are: phenomena of sleep, dream and death, and belief in possession, in spirits and ghosts, and in magic. On the other hand, the principle characteristics of Hinduism are: *dharma*, *bhakti*, and rebirth. It will be wrong to say that the Hindus, particularly the lower castes, do not believe in spirits and ghosts or in magic, dreams, etc. Similarly, there are many tribals who worship Hindu gods and goddesses, celebrate Hindu festivals and fairs, and observe Hindu customs, traditions and rituals. It is, therefore, not easy to distinguish between Animism and Hinduism. Ahuja (1965), Verrier Elwin (1943), and Risley (1908) also maintain that the distinction between Hinduism



and Animism is artificial and meaningless. This means that because we find admixture of Hindu religious elements and values in tribal religion and tribal values in Hindu religion, religion as a single criterion cannot be used to distinguish between a tribe and a caste. Ghurye, Naik and Bailey have also rejected this criterion.

Using geographical isolation as a criterion of distinction, it is said that the tribals live in geographically isolated regions like hills and mountains, but Hindus live in plain regions. Due to lesser contacts with the civilized neighbours, tribals are more uncivilized than the Hindus. It may be true by and large that tribals live in hills away from the lines of communication but we have examples which show that many caste Hindus also live in isolated regions and many tribals live in plains. This means that in addition to a purely geographical isolation, we demand other criteria also to distinguish a tribe from a caste.

The third criterion is language difference between a tribe and a caste. It is suggested that each tribe has its own language but not a caste; for example, Gonds speak Gondi language, Bhils speak Bhili or Vagdi language, Santhals speak Santhali language, and so on. But since there are tribes which do not have their own languages but speak a dialect of one of the main Indian languages, as in South India, therefore purely cultural criterion of language also is not a scientific criterion for distinguishing between a tribe and a caste.

Economic backwardness too is not a correct criterion for distinction between a tribe and a caste. To maintain that tribals are backward and primitive but caste Hindus are not is not a correct statement. It is true that many tribes even today are economically backward; they have low income, use primitive methods in cultivation and in some cases still use barter system in exchange, but there are many tribes (for example, Meena) which are economically advanced. At the same time, there are many castes which are as much economically backward as many tribes. Bailey (1960: 9) also rejects this criterion by holding that in so far as the phrase 'economically backward' refers to a standard of living rather than to a type of economic relationship, it is sociologically unsatisfactory. He has suggested that instead of taking the totality of behaviour, we should narrow the enquiry (in differentiating between a tribe and a caste) by concentrating on particular fields of behaviour in a given society. He, thus, used politico-economic system or 'economic structure', as he calls it, for differentiating between a tribe and a caste in his study of Konds (tribe) and Oriyas (caste) in Orissa. In the analysis of the politicoeconomic organization, he concentrated on two factors: (i) control over land, and (ii) right to resources of land. He maintained that in both the tribal and caste societies, we find 'landowners' who have direct access to land, and 'dependents' who are dependent on the landowners for achieving their share of land's resources. But analyzing the economic organization of a village territory (inhabited by castes) and a clan territory (inhabited by tribes), he found that a village is divided into economically specialized interdependent castes arranged hierarchically, whereas though a clan territory is also composed of groups but these are not hierarchically arranged and nor they are interdependent through economic organization. In other words, in a tribal society, a larger proportion of people has a direct access to land while in the case of a caste-based society, the larger population of people achieves the right to land through a dependent relationship. Thus, according to Bailey (*Ibid*: 264-65), a tribe is organized on a 'segmentary system' and a caste is organized on an 'organic system'. He writes: "The only solution (to differentiate between tribe and caste) is to postulate a continuum, at one end of which is a society whose political system is entirely of the segmentary egalitarian type and which contains no dependents whatsoever, and at the other end of which is a society in which segmentary political relations exist only between a very small proportion of the total society, and most people act in the system in the role of dependents. The political system of this society can be compared with an organic system." But he holds that at what point of continuum a tribe ceases and a caste begins is impossible to say.

In India, the situation is even more complicated because there is hardly any tribe which exists as a separate society. No tribe in India has a completely separate political boundary. Big tribes like Bhils, Santhals, Oraon, etc. are territorially dispersed. Further, almost all tribes have been absorbed in varying degrees into the wider society. Economically too, the tribal economy is not different from the regional or national economy. Thus, tribes which answer to the anthropologists' conception of the ideal type are rarely to be found. Andre Beteille (1969) says that what we find today in India are tribes in

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transition. But we do regard certain communities as tribal and have included them in the recognized list of tribes, called Scheduled Tribes.

### Caste and Class

Caste and class are both status groups. A status group is a collection of individuals who share a distinctive style of life and a certain consciousness of kind. However, castes are perceived as hereditary groups with a fixed ritual status while classes are defined in terms of the relations of production. The members of a class have a similar socio-economic status in relation to other classes in the society, while the members of a caste have either a high or a low ritual status in relation to other castes. A social class is not organized but the individuals and families who compose it are relatively similar in educational, economic and social status. Those who are classified as part of the same social class have similar life chances. Some sociologists regard social classes as being primarily economic in nature, whereas others tend to stress factors such as prestige, style of life, attitudes, etc.

Three criteria are generally used for determining an individual's position in the class system: objective, reputational, and subjective. The objective criteria are: income, occupation and education; the reputational criteria refer to the attitudes and judgements of other members of the community; and the subjective criteria refer to how people place themselves within the society.

Caste is a closed social stratum that determines its members' prestige, occupation and social relationships. In each caste, social relations between members of different castes are severely limited and formalized. In class, on the other hand, the social relations of members of one class with other classes are circumscribed.

Castes and classes co-exist in the society. Also, castes can function as classes on many occasions. When *dhobis* (washermen) go on strike for increasing their rates, they function not as a caste but as a class.

Many caste groups (say, Brahmins or Baniyas) are composed of a number of castes. These are divided into castes which may in turn be divided into sub-castes. A broad grouping may be referred to as a segment of a lower order and its sub-divisions as segments of higher orders (Andre Beteille, 1977: 60).

Briefly speaking, thus, the difference between caste and class may be given as follows:

1. Caste is an endogamous group but class is not.
2. Caste is a unique phenomenon (according to Leach and Dumont) found in India but class is a universal phenomenon.
3. Caste works as an active political force in a village (Beteille, 1966: 200) but class does not work so. Andre Beteille on the basis of his study in Sripuram in South India found that contrary to the Marxist viewpoint, class categories do not constitute a basis for communal and political action. Referring to this, Leach (1960) has said that when caste assumes economic and political functions and competes with other castes, it defies caste principles. He says: "The level at which caste associations assume political and economic functions, they violate the traditional norms of caste reciprocity and enter into the arenas of conflict, a situation different from that of a caste." Gough and Richard Fox also hold the same opinion. M.N. Srinivas (1962: 7) does not agree with Leach on this. He maintains: "I cannot agree with Leach when he says that competition between caste groups is defiance of caste principles. It is true that castewise division of labour facilitates the interdependence of castes (and this is strikingly seen in the *jajmani* system), but interdependence is not the whole story. Castes do compete with each other for acquiring political and economic power and high ritual position".
4. Caste has an organic character but class has a segmentary character where various segments are motivated by competition.
5. In the caste system, there is co-operation and economic inter-dependence but in the class system, there is no economic dependence. Instead, there is competition in the class system. In this context, Leach (*Ibid*: 9-10) has said that caste system is an organic system, with each particular caste filling a distinctive functional role. It is a system of labour division from which the element of competition among members has been largely excluded.

6. In the caste system, upper castes compete with each other for the services of the lower-castes but in the class system, lower- classes compete with each other for the favour of the upper classes. Referring to this, Leach (*Ibid*: 5-6) has said: "It is the characteristic of the class-organized societies that rights of ownership are the prerogative of minority groups which form privileged elites. The capacity of the upper-class minority to exploit the services of the lower-class majority is critically dependent upon the fact that members of the under-privileged groups must compete among themselves for the favours of the elites. In a caste society, however, the position is reversed".
7. In the caste system, status of a caste is determined not by the economic and the political privileges but by the ritualistic legitimation of authority, that is, in the caste-based system, ritual norms encompass the norms of power and wealth (Dumont). For example, even though Brahmins have no economic and political power yet they are placed at the top of the caste hierarchy. In the class system, ritual norms have no importance at all but power and wealth alone determine one's status. According to Dumont, in the class-based system, economic and political ideologies encompass the ritual order. Bailey, however, does not accept Dumont's state-ment that religious ideas rather than the economic values establish the rank of each caste. He says that if we accept this statement, it would mean that changes in control over economic resources can take place without causing changes in rank. This is only partially true. It may be true for Brahmins and untouchables but not for the intermediate castes. In his own study in Bisipara, Bailey (1957: 264-65) found that change in wealth is followed by change in rank. Further, in the caste system, social mobility is not possible but in the class system, change in status is possible. D.N. Majumdar (1958) in this context has even explained caste as a closed class. This view is not accepted by M.N. Srinivas (1962-42) who thinks that movement is always possible through the processes of sanskritization and westernization. Andre Betaille (1965) has also said that no social system is absolutely closed. There is always some scope, however limited, for alternative combinations. But the choice allowed for different combinations varies from community to community.

## 6.4 Characteristics of Caste

The structure of caste could be discussed by analyzing its important features. When Bougle (1958) has postulated three elements of caste, namely, hereditary specialization, hierarchy and repulsion or opposition, Hocart (1950) has emphasized on ritual purity and impurity, while Risley (1915) has referred to endogamy and hereditary occupation. Ghurye, Hutton, Ketkar, Dutt, etc. have also pointed out all these features. In giving these features, the scholars have not made distinction between caste as a unit and caste as a system. Keeping this difference in view, it may be maintained that the important features of caste as a unit are hereditary membership, endogamy, fixed occupation, and caste councils; while the features of caste as a system are hierarchy, commensal restrictions, and restrictions with regard to physical and social distance. We will analyze these features of caste as a system and caste as a unit separately.

### 6.4.1 Characteristics (of Caste) as a System

#### 1. Hierarchy Based on Birth

No two castes have an equal status. One caste has either a low or a high status in relation to other castes. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the exact or even the approximate place of each caste in the hierarchical system. Two methods have mainly been used in assessing the hierarchy: observational method and opinion-assessing method. In the former, either the attributional method or the interactional method has been used for ranking the castes. The attributional method determines the rank of a caste by its behaviour, for example, its customs, practice of degrading occupation, vegetarianism, habits of liquor-drinking, etc. ; the interactional method evaluates ranks of two given castes in relationship to each other by observing the commensal interaction and marital relations, etc. between the two castes. If a caste 'A' accepts a girl in marriage from a caste 'B' but does not give a girl in that caste, 'A' will have higher status than 'B'. This is because of the hypergamy rule according to which a girl of a lower caste can marry in a higher caste but not viceversa. Similarly, if the members of a caste 'A' do not accept food from the members of a caste 'B' but members of caste 'B' accept it, it will indicate the higher status of 'A' over 'B'.

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In the 'opinion-assessing' method, the ranks of various castes in the collective caste hierarchy are assessed on the basis of the opinions of various respondents from different castes. The advantage in the 'opinion-assessing' method over the 'observational' method is that in the former, it is possible to regard hierarchy and interaction as two variables and study their relationship. A.C. Mayer, M.N. Srinivas, D.N. Majumdar, S.C. Dube, Pauline Mahar, etc. had used the observational method while Mckim Marriott and Stanley Freed had used the opinion-assessment method in analyzing the caste ranks in the caste hierarchy. S.C.Dube (1955: 34-42) used only one criterion for determining the caste hierarchies in three villages in Telangana: which castes can theoretically take food from which other castes. Mayer (*Caste and Kinship in Central India*, 1960) on the other hand, used the criterion of 'commensality' which involves principally the giving and taking of food and water and sharing of the same pipe (*huka*) among various castes. Pauline Mahar (1959: 92-107) ranked castes with regard to their ritual purity and pollution by using a multiple-scaling technique. She issued a 13-item questionnaire about the kinds of interaction between castes which involve to a considerable extent ritual purity and pollution. M.N. Srinivas (cf. Mckim Marriott, 1955) and D.N. Majumdar (1959) constructed their own picture of hierarchy. Srinivas, however, agrees that such evaluations (by constructing one's own picture of hierarchy) are somewhat subjective. Mayer also maintains that caste hierarchies constructed according to different criteria do not completely agree.

Mckim Marriott (1955) and Stanley Freed (1963: 879-91) used the card system to determine median rank for each caste in the collective caste hierarchy. Both presented a set of movable cards, upon each of which was written the name of a caste, to each respondent with a request to arrange the cards in their order of rank. The slight difference between Marriott's and Freed's procedure was that Marriott presented the cards one by one, while Freed presented them altogether. Scholars like Srinivas and Mayer have commented that caste membership may influence a person's view of the caste hierarchy, or at least his opinion about the place of his own caste within it. But Freed did not find it to be so. In his study of twenty-five respondents in 1957-58 selected from twelve castes in Shantinagar village (pseudonym) near Delhi, he found that most of the respondents ranked their own castes close to the ranks accorded to them by others. He, thus, concluded that caste membership has little effect upon a person's overall views of the caste hierarchy.

In recent years, though there has been a change in some characteristics of the caste system but there has been no change at all in the hierarchical characteristic.

## 2. Commensal Restrictions

Detailed rules are laid down with regard to the kind of food that can be accepted by a person from different castes. According to Blunt (1911: 90), there are seven important taboos in this respect: (i) commensal taboo, which determines rules regarding persons in whose company a man may eat; (ii) cooking taboo, which lays down rules regarding persons who may cook food that a man may eat; (iii) eating taboo, which prescribes rituals to be observed at the time of eating; (iv) drinking taboo, which prescribes rules regarding accepting water etc., from other persons; (v) food taboo, which prescribes rules regarding the kind of food (*kachcha*, *pucca*, green vegetables, etc.) a man may eat with members of other castes; (vi) smoking taboo, which lays down rules regarding persons whose pipe (*hukka*) a man may smoke; and (vii) vessels taboo, which determines the types of vessels to be used or avoided for cooking food to protect oneself from being polluted.

Blunt believes that the commensality restriction is the result of marriage restriction, but Hutton (1963: 73) claims it is the other way round, if one comes before the other at all. On the basis of the severity of the food taboo, Blunt (*Ibid*: 90) has classified castes into five groups: (i) castes which take the *kachcha* (cooked with water) and *pucca* (cooked with *ghee*) food cooked only by a member of their own endogamous group; (ii) castes which eat food cooked by the members of own caste and also by Brahmins; (iii) castes which take food cooked by the members of own caste or by Brahmins or by Rajputs; (iv) castes which take food cooked by the members of own caste or by Brahmins or Rajputs or by lower castes of rank which they regard as at least equal to their own; and (v) castes which eat food cooked by almost anyone. Hutton (*Ibid*: 75) has criticized this classification because of the distinct restrictions on the *kachcha* and *pucca* food. Some which fall into one group as regards the *kachcha* food will fall into another in regard to the *pucca* food about which they are not so strict. For example, some Brahmin castes and Kachhi (vegetable sellers) and

Kumhar (potters) castes will fall into the first category on all accounts but some castes like Kalwar (distiller and liquor-seller) will fall into group (i) for the *kachcha* food and group (iii) for the *pucca* food. *Halwai* (sweatmeat seller) likewise falls into group (i) for the *kachcha* and group (iv) for the *pucca*; Kayasth into group (ii) for both; Kahar into group (iv) for the *kachcha* and group (iii) for the *pucca* food. These instances clearly show that each caste almost has a law to itself. The various castes, thus, do not fall into uniform groups.

In the last few decades, however, we find these commensal restrictions are no longer rigidly observed. In other words, there is change in the commensal characteristic of the caste system.

### 3. Compelling Religious Sanctions on Social Participation

Restrictions on social interaction have been imposed because of the belief that pollution can be carried by mere bodily contact. It is because of such beliefs that the low caste people engaged in inferior occupations are avoided by the upper caste people. Likewise, the *chamars*, *dhobis*, *doms* and hundreds of beef-eating low castes, commonly known as untouchables, are shunned by the high caste Hindus. There are also specific rules for greeting and interacting with members of high or intermediate castes, for sharing common cot (*charpoi*) with others, and for day-to-day as well as ritual interaction.

### 4. The Outcaste Substratum

Castes engaged in defiling or menial or polluting occupations are treated as untouchables. They are called outcastes, depressed classes or scheduled castes. These castes are believed to have descended from the races originally inhabiting India before the invasion of the Aryans. Later they accepted servitude on the lowest fringes of Hindu society. They mostly live outside the village and eke out their existence by labour like scavenging, shoe-making, tanning, etc. They are not permitted to draw water from wells used by the uppercaste people. They are even debarred from the use of public roads, schools, temples, cremation grounds, hotels and tea-shops. They sacrifice animals to appease the dreaded demons that dominate their lives. Their presence and their touch is thought to contaminate others. In the Peshva period, Doms were not permitted to enter Poona city between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. because it was thought that even their shadows (which become longer in this period due to the setting and the rising of the sun) could pollute the high caste people. For the same reason, Brahmin doctors in South India used to wrap their hands with a silken cloth before examining the pulse of their Sudra patients. On the same ground, Panan (basket-maker), Tiyan (toddy-drawer), Pulayan, Shanan and other lower castes in South India were not allowed to approach high castes within certain distances. They were to maintain a distance of thirty-six, seventy-two or ninety-six paces from these people, depending on their status. Caste mores have held these untouchable castes down in abysmal ignorance and degradation on the assumption that they suffer justly for their vicious deeds in previous lives. However, many of the prohibitions imposed on the out-castes have now been relaxed. But, though legally these restrictions have been removed, and socially also pollution is no longer treated very seriously by the majority of the high caste Hindus, yet we continue to find the practising of some restrictions in ritual situations, though no longer enforced in ordinary day-to-day secular life.

## 6.4.2 Characteristics (of Caste) as a Unit

### 1. Ascribed Status

The membership of an individual in a caste is determined by his birth. Since each caste has its own rank in relation to other castes, the high or low status of an individual depends upon the ritual status of the caste in which he is born. In fact, every aspect of the life of an orthodox Hindu hinges on his birth. His domestic ceremonies and customs, temple worship, circle of friends and occupation, all depend upon the level of the caste into which he is born.

### 2. Endogamy

The members of a caste have to marry in their own caste and sub-caste. Endogamy has, thus, been permanently enforced within caste groups.




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3. Fixed Occupation

Each caste has a fixed hereditary occupation. There is an old saying, once a Brahmin, always a Brahmin and once a Chamar, always a Chamar. Since certain occupations are considered unclean, persons following them become untouchable and anyone adopting them, unless in company with his caste, must necessarily be outcasted to preserve the whole caste from pollution. But this also does not mean that all Brahmins have always to remain engaged in priestly occupation, or all Rajputs are always to take to protective function by joining the military, etc. Under certain circumstances, some members in a caste were permitted to change their occupations. Similarly, different sub-castes of the same caste are found engaged in different occupations. For example, four sub-castes of a Khatik caste (a caste of butchers) in Uttar Pradesh are engaged in different occupations of butchery (*bekawala*), masonry (*rajgar*), rope-making (*sombatta*) and selling of fruits (*mewa farosh*). Similarly, Teli caste in Bengal has two divisions – Tili and Teli – the former engaged in pressing oil and the latter in selling oil since the pressing of oil-seeds is stigmatized as a degrading occupation because it destroys life by crushing the seeds. Tilis are treated as untouchable but not the Telis. Telis will outcaste a member who should venture to press it. The change of occupation did not necessarily involve the change of caste unless it involved the change of status. According to Blunt (1911: 13), when such a change of status occurs, it will take one of the three forms: (i) segregation into a new caste, or (ii) affiliation of the new group to another already existing caste, or (iii) the creation of a new endogamous sub-caste within the original caste.

Though generally the occupational restrictions imposed by caste have a religious motive but sometimes they may have a purely economic purpose also. For example, O'Malley (*Indian Caste Customs*, 1932: 134-135) refers to Sonars (goldsmiths) of one district in Madhya Pradesh who have a feast at which the caste men take oath that they will not reveal the amount of alloy decided to be mixed with gold by the Sonars on pain of being outcasted.



**Notes** After the industrialization of the country, particularly after the two World Wars, a significant change has come to be observed in this characteristic of the traditional occupation of caste. Restriction on change of occupation has been weakened and occupational mobility has become feasible.

4. Caste Councils

Each caste has a council of its own, known as caste panchayat. This panchayat exercised tremendous power over its members till recently. Today, though some caste panchayats are found to have branches all over India because of the development of the postal system and rapid communications of various kinds but till few decades back, these panchayats acted only for a limited area, an area small enough for the members of the council to assemble and for members of the caste within the area to have some knowledge of each other as a general rule. Local conditions, such as ease of communication, etc., determine the area within which the caste council functions. Thus, since the ideal of a council for the whole caste or even a sub-caste is impossible to attain, the members of a caste or a sub-caste usually form a nearly related group called *biradri* (association of kinsmen) which constitutes an exogamous unit within the endogamous sub-caste or caste. This group acts for the caste or the sub-caste as a whole in enforcing sanctions on the members within their sphere of action. Some of the offences dealt with by these panchayats till recently were: eating and drinking with other castes and sub-castes with whom such intercourse was forbidden, keeping as concubine a woman of other caste, adultery with a married woman, refusal to fulfil a promise of marriage, non-payment of debt, petty assaults, breaches of customs, and so on. The mode of punishment usually adopted was outcasting, fine, feast to caste men, corporal punishment, etc. (Ghurye, 1961: 4). All the members of the caste were obliged to accept the verdict of their panchayat. Even in the British period, these panchayats were so powerful that they could retry cases which were once decided by the civil and the criminal courts. In a way, thus, a caste panchayat was a semi-sovereign body.

The officials of the panchayat who perform executive and judicial functions may either be nominated or elected or may be hereditary or some may be elected while others may be hereditary. Blunt (1911: 104), Sleeman O'Malley (1932: 52), and Hutton (1961: 100) point out that lower the caste in the social scale, stronger its combination and the more efficient its organization. The procedure observed for trial is extremely simple, informal and untrammelled by the law of evidence.

Referring to the authority enjoyed by these caste councils, Kapadia (*Sociological Bulletin*, September, 1962: 74) has referred to certain examples pertaining to three periods—1962, 1912 and 1861. Pointing to the period 1861, he gives two examples of a civil judge of Maharashtra who had married a widow, and the couple was so much humiliated by their caste council that they had to commit suicide; another of a person who was ex-communicated by his caste council forgoing to London and was readmitted on paying a fine of Rs: 1,500. Referring to a period fifty years later, that is, in 1912, Kapadia refers to one Raman Bhai who was ex-communicated from his caste for taking food with low caste people; and one Jaisukhlal Mehta who too was ex-communicated for marrying his widowed sister. Referring to the year 1962, Kapadia maintains that when caste council is legally deprived of its authority to enforce its traditional norms upon its members by ex-communication, it continues to regulate the conduct and minds of its members. In 1993, in villages the caste councils may hold some power but in the urban areas, they are no longer powerful.

### Origin of Caste

Though, a number of theories have been advanced to explain the origin of caste in India but no one properly explains it. Whereas Risley explains its origin due to racial differences, Nesfield and Ibbetson refer to occupational factors, Abbe Dubois refers to the role played by Brahmins, and Hutton refers to belief in *mana* in its origin. We will shorten the list and discuss here only the important theories, excluding geographical, evolutionary and such other explanations which are not based on a sufficiently careful and competent evaluation.

### Traditional Theory

A good number of western and non-Indian scholars (like Hsu) have described Hindu society as supernatural-centered society in which people are lured by abstract truths, and search for it through mysticism and not through science. These scholars hold that the Hindus seek intimacy with the Ultimate Reality and explain everything in terms of God and religion. Even the origin of institution like caste is sought in the body of Brahma. The traditional theory believes that the caste system has been established by divine ordinance or at least with divine approval. The best analysis of the traditional theory is given by S.P. Nagendra (cf. Unnithan *et al*, *Towards the Sociology of Culture*, 1968: 262). When the sociological theory regards caste system as a man-made or an artificially created and an ascriptive system of stratification in which status and role are determined by birth, the traditional theory views it as a normal and natural system. This theory has two versions: mythical and metaphysical.

The mythical version regards four *varnas* as four castes and believes that these four 'castes' have emerged from different parts of Brahma's body. It considers caste as a naturally determined organization of social functions and explains the membership of an individual in a particular caste in terms of *karma* and *dharma* doctrines. Even Krishna in *Geeta* has said: "The four-fold system (*chaturvarnya*) was created by me according to the division of qualities (*gunas*) and functions (*karma*)." There are many stories in our religious books contradicting each other regarding the origin of caste. Muir had collected 152 pages of quotations from Sanskrit books on the origin of the caste system. All these stories refer to *karma* and *dharma* doctrines too. According to the *karma* doctrine, a man is born in a particular caste because of his actions performed in his previous incarnation. If he had performed better actions, he would have been born in a higher caste, that is, birth in a particular caste is not an accident. He was born in that caste because he deserved to be born there (Srinivas, 1952: 25-26). According to the *dharma* doctrine, a man who accepts the caste system and the norms of his particular caste, is living according to *dharma*, while a man who questions them is violating *dharma*. Living according to *dharma* is rewarded while violation of *dharma* is punished, both here and hereafter. If he observes the rules of *dharma*, he will be born in his next birth in a high and rich caste, otherwise he will be born in a low and poor caste.

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The metaphysical version explains the fixed function, hierarchy, and other characteristics of caste. Each caste has a separate function and this function is determined by the nature (*swabhava*) and the qualities (*guna*) of the caste members. According to the Hindu view, *swabhava* of an individual comprises two sets of qualities—*gotrika* and *namika*. The former are the hereditary qualities which the individual inherits from his *gotra* (lineage) and which he shares with all the members of his family; and the latter are the individual qualities which are specifically one's own and which one does not share with any other member of his family.

Thus, when the *namika* (individual) qualities differentiate an individual from other individuals, the *gotrika* qualities identify him to a particular group. It is these *gotrika* qualities which determine his ascriptive nature and entitle him the status in a *jati* (caste). This explains the characteristic of hereditary membership of the caste system.

*Swabhava* (nature) and action (occupation) cannot be separated from each other. This explains another characteristic of caste, namely, the fixed occupation. Let us understand it. Functions are of two types—ordinary and extraordinary. The former require no special skills for their performance and the latter require specialized knowledge. The extraordinary functions are again of three types: techno-economic functions, politico-legal functions, and cultural-religious functions. The first are means-oriented, the second are end-oriented, and the last are agent-oriented. Since the agent-oriented cultural-religious functions aim at the ultimate end of life, the people who perform them get the highest status in society. On the other hand, those who are engaged in ordinary functions get the lowest status. In between the two, we have people engaged in administrative-military (politico-legal) and economic-commercial (techno-economic) functions. Since the politico-legal or end-oriented functions are more functional for society than the techno-economic or means-oriented functions, the people engaged in the former get higher status than the latter because of the nature of orientation of functions. The Brahmins are engaged in cultural-religious functions, Kshatriyas in politico-legal functions, Vaishyas in techno-economic functions, and Sudras in ordinary functions. Since the first three have undergone training (in previous births), they are rightly called *dwijas*. This explains the hierarchical arrangement of four *varnas* considered as four castes in the traditional theory.

In a hierarchical organization based on the clear-cut differentiation of functions, restrictions such as commensality are bound to exist. But for these restrictions, the very purpose of the division of functions would be defeated. This also explains the different rituals observed by each group as well as the marriage restrictions. This is, thus, the metaphysical aspect of the traditional theory.

The traditional theory of the origin of caste has been rejected by the scholars mainly because of two reasons: one, it considers caste as a natural phenomenon; and two, it considers four *varnas* as four castes. If this is accepted, it would mean that *varna* and not caste is the unit of the caste system. And this we know, is not correct. Referring to this, M.N. Srinivas (1962: 63-69) also writes that the idea of caste as the four-fold division of society represents a gross oversimplification of facts. The real unit of the caste system is not the *varna* but *jati*, which is a very small endogamous group, practising a traditional occupation and enjoying a certain amount of cultural, ritual and juridical autonomy.

### Brahmanical Theory

Abbe Dubois (*A Description of the People of India*, 1817, quoted by Hutton, 1961) feels that the caste system originated and developed in India because of Brahmins. He maintains that the caste system is an ingenious device made by Brahmins for Brahmins. Brahmins imposed restrictions on eating and drinking, marriage, and social relations, etc. with non-Brahmins to preserve their purity necessary for the sacerdotal functions they were to perform. At the same time, they gave themselves a high status and special privileges and prerogatives in the *Brahmanas* and other books and declared all others as inferior to them. They said: "Whatever a Brahmin says is a social norm and the entire property of the society belongs to Brahmins. A Brahmin can keep four wives, and he can never be severely punished, so much so that even for offences for which other persons are liable to be hanged, a Brahmin will only shave his head. The salvation of individuals and society depends on the performance of the elaborate rites by the Brahmins; without his ministry, even the king's prayers and offerings were unacceptable to gods. He (Brahmin) even added to the *punya* (spiritual merit) of the king because one-sixteenth of the *punya* accumulated by the *Purohit* (priest) through offerings and sacrifices went to the credit of the ruler of the land".

Ghurye (1961: 169) also believes in the role of Brahmins in the origin of caste and supports the Brahmanical theory. He maintains that the various factors that characterize caste-society were the result, in the first instance, of the attempts on the part of the upholders of the Brahmanic civilization to exclude the aborigines and the Sudras from religious and social communion with themselves. When the Aryans entered India, they had three well-defined classes. But when this fourth class of the Sudras was formulated, the Brahmanic literature contemplated it as in contradistinction to the other three classes. Thus, the Vedic opposition between the Arya and the Dasa was replaced by the Brahmanic classification of the *dvijati* and the *ekajati* (the Sudra), suggesting the transmutation of the Brahmanic and later periods. As an important constituent of the Brahmanic culture in connection with the sacrificial ritual, the Aryan notions of ceremonial purity took on an exaggerated aspect. How fastidious the Brahmanic ideal of ceremonial purity had come to be by the time of the *Sutras* is best illustrated by the meticulous rules laid down in them for purification and for general conduct. Brahmins, partly out of their honest desire to preserve the purity of Vedic ritual, partly being the victims of their own ideas of ceremonial purity, and partly also owing to their consciousness of superiority over the aborigines, first enacted rules for the guidance of their own members (Ghurye, 1961: 174). The social pattern set for themselves by the most respected class in the society could not fail to be imitated by groups that would claim respectability. Thus, it must have been that the original restrictions on marriage and regulations about the acceptance of food, which contemplated only four classes in society, came to be the characteristics of each and every well-marked group. (Ghurye, 1961: 172), therefore, concludes that caste in India is a Brahmanic child of the Indo-Aryan culture, cradled in the land of the Ganga and the Yamuni and thence transferred to other parts of the country.

Hutton (1961: 17), however, feels that it is difficult to accept the Brahmanical theory of the origin of caste. He mainly gives two arguments against it: (i) if this theory is accepted, it would mean that caste must have originated at a date when Brahmins must have got the political power and he thinks that caste did not originate at so late a date; and (ii) so deeply rooted a social institution like caste could hardly have been imposed by an administrative measure. But both arguments are illogical. Brahmins claimed high Status and special prerogatives not when they got the political power in the end of the second century B.C. but when they wrote the *Brahmanas* somewhere in the fifth century B.C. The opportunity of writing the *Brahmanas* in the period when Kshatriyas who were the rulers of the country and who had refused to accept the superiority of the Brahmins over them, was provided by the wars among Kshatriya rulers. Thus, since the *Brahmanas* was written in early period, Hutton is not correct in assuming that caste will have originated at a late date, if Brahmanical theory is accepted. His other argument is also not correct because Brahmins imposed their superiority over others not through administrative means but by arousing the religious sentiments of the people. However, we do agree that the origin of the caste system cannot be explained only in terms of a single factor like the role played by the Brahmins, as Abbe Dubois has done. Racial, religious, economic and other factors must also have been responsible in creating this system. We will, therefore, try to understand the role of these other factors also.

### Racial Theory

The most ardent exponent of this theory was Herbert Risley, though he has been supported by scholars like Ghurye, Majumdar, Westermarck, and others. According to this theory, the clash of cultures and the contact of races crystallized castes in India (Risley, 1915: 56; Ghurye, 1961: 119-135). In the history of the world, whenever one people has subdued another, the conquerors have not only taken women as concubines or wives from the conquered group but have also refused to give their own daughters in marriage to them. When these two are of the same race, or at any rate of the same colour, complete amalgamation between them soon takes place. But if they belong to two different races and colours, the course of evolution runs on different lines. A class of half-breeds is then formed as the result of irregular unions between women of the higher and men of the lower groups who marry only among themselves and are to all intents and purposes a caste.

In India also, the migrant Aryans had their own ideas of ceremonial purity. They considered the original inhabitants as inferior to them. Besides, the Aryans were essentially patrilineal in nature while the local population whom they conquered were matrilineal. They, therefore, married with the



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daughters of the aboriginals but refused to give their daughters to them. The children of such marriages had to be assigned the lowest position in the society and were called the *chandals*. Thus, the origin of the group of 'half-breeds' as well as the feeling of racial superiority ultimately became responsible for the origin of the caste system.

Analyzing the processes of development of the caste system, Risley (1915: 70-72) has referred to six processes in the formation of castes:

1. **Change in traditional occupation:** By adopting a new occupation, either a caste or a sub-division of a caste ultimately develops into a distinct caste.
2. **Migration:** In early periods when the means of transport and communications were not fully developed, whenever a section of a caste migrated to other region, it became difficult for it to maintain contacts with the parental caste. Gradually, therefore, it was completely cut off from the parental caste and developed as a new caste.
3. **Change in customs:** The formation of new castes as a consequence of discarding old customs and usages and by adopting the new practices has been a familiar incident of the caste system from the earliest times.
4. **Preservation of old traditions:** Certain castes cherish the traditions of bygone sovereignty and preserve old traces of an organization. To separate themselves from those sections who have assumed new traditions and customs, they take up a new name and thus a new caste comes into existence.
5. **Enrolling oneself into the rank of Hinduism:** Sometimes either an entire tribe or a section of a tribe becomes 'Hinduised' and taking a new caste name, it enters into the rank of Hinduism and distinguishes it-self from the other castes; for example, Maria Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and Rajbanshis of Bengal.
6. **Role of religious enthusiasts:** A religious enthusiast sometimes preaches his own doctrines and his followers form a separate sect which ultimately develops as a new caste; for example, Kabirpanthies.

Risley's racial theory is supported by many scholars. According to Ghurye (1961: 160), being civilized and fair in colour in comparison to the natives, the Vedic Aryans tried to show off their exclusiveness. They had developed the exclusive spirit in social behaviour and had cultivated a partiality for ideas of ceremonial purity. They used rather strong expressions against the natives and imposed various restrictions in social interaction with them. The Indo-Aryans comprising the Romans, the Iranians, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the Anglo-Saxons after migrating from Central Asia in about 2500 B.C. settled in the Gangetic plain in India. Since their religion represented the early Vedic religion, we can call them the 'Vedic Indians'. These Vedic Indians spoke of themselves as 'Arya' and described the native population as 'dark colour' people without noses, and applied to them the term 'Dasa' which in Iranian language stood for 'enemy'. In matters of religious faith and practice, though they began by stigmatizing the faith and practice of the natives, they did not develop the extreme intolerance. Their tolerance of the varied faiths was based on the principle that religious and moral beliefs and practices were to be adjusted to the spiritual stature of individuals and groups. They (Arya) not only tolerated the beliefs and practices not harmonizing with their central doctrines but also assimilated a number in their own complex. Partially at least on the social organizational side, the caste system was the *modus operandi* accommodating diversity of faiths and practices. Besides Ghurye, Dutt (1931), Majumdar (1952) and Westermarck (*History of Human Marriage*, 1891) have also supported the racial theory of the origin of the caste system. Westermarck observes that India was inhabited by the dark people before the fairer Aryans took possession of it. Their bitter contempt for foreign tribes and their strong antipathies of race found vent in the sharp distinctions which they drew between themselves and the conquered population. It were these distinctions which originated caste system. Hutton (1961) considers racial factor as one of the factors in the origin of caste system.

If Risley's racial theory is to be accepted, it would mean that caste system should not be confined to India but should be found in all those societies which have faced the conquests by other racial groups. Risley himself is of the opinion that caste is not confined to India but it occurs in a pronounced form in South America, Canada, and Mexico, etc. In South America, Negroes and the various mixed races



are cut off from the legal unions with the white race. The same phenomenon is observed among the half-breeds of Canada and Mexico who do not intermarry with natives and marry only occasionally with pure-blood Europeans (Risley, 1915: 56; Narmadeshwar Prasad, 1956: 25). Therefore, to analyze the scientific explanation of Risley's theory, we will now take up the question whether caste is a unique Indian phenomenon or not.

### Is Caste System a Unique Indian Phenomenon?

Scholars like Leach, Dumont, Pocock, Bougle, Hocart, Hutton, Senart, Srinivas, Gould, etc feel that caste is a phenomenon peculiar to India only, whereas Risley, Crook, etc., believe that caste is a universal phenomenon. There are scholars who view caste as an ethnographic category and in this form it (caste) refers exclusively to a system of social organization peculiar to Hindu India. But those who regard caste as a sociological category feel that it denotes almost any kind of class structure of exceptional rigidity. Fredrik Barth (cf. Leach, 1960: 4) who studied social stratification system of Muslims in Swat, North Pakistan, found that in a narrowly cultural sense, though the pattern there was a good deal further away from the Hindu model, yet caste exists there in the sense that the social groups are linked with the occupation and hierarchical ranking and the system of labour organization is also closely similar to that of the Hindu *jajmanisystem*. He, therefore, thought that viewed as a structural phenomenon, caste exists in North Pakistan also but not if it is viewed as a cultural phenomenon. Leach (1960: 5) and Dumont (1958), however, feel that even as a structural phenomenon, caste is confined to India. They maintain that caste denotes a particular species of structural organization indissolubly linked with pan-Indian civilization. Yalman (cf Leach, 1960) in his study of Buddhist Sinhalese found that what exists is the ideology of caste and not its practice and this ideology is found in endogamy, pollution, and rank concepts. These concepts are, however, accepted voluntarily because of the preference for close kin groups and not on any religious grounds.

Ghurye(1961: 138-156) has analyzed the elements of caste outside India. In his quest for these elements, he reviewed Egypt, Western Asia, China, Japan, America, Rome, and tribal Europe and found that distinction by birth was usually recognized by many primitive people and almost all the major civilizations of ancient times. During medieval times all over Europe, the primitive people, in so far as their arts and crafts were neither many nor highly specialized, had few classes whose status was fixed. But wherever status was recognized, privileges and restrictions in the matter of the choice of avocation were very common. Restriction on the choice of one's mate based on birth was comparatively infrequent among them (*Ibid*: 152). In tribal England, Rome, and Asian civilizations, occupations were hereditary. The lower classes were not allowed to change their hereditary trades and occupations. Hence, once in a trade, it was impossible to move out of it, and the natural facility of a boy learning his father's trade tended to fix each generation into the same line. The middle and upper classes, however, were permitted to change their callings. Besides, the occupations were graded in certain order as high and low. Specialized occupations had come to form themselves into units of community life. Society was divided into two (Brazil, Saudi Arabia), three (Mexico, Rome), four (Egypt: soldiers, priests, craftsmen, and serfs; Iran: priests, warriors, artisans and herdsmen) or five (Japan) well-marked status-groups, intermarriage between which was often prohibited. In almost all cultures, the clergy were regarded as members of the nobility and far superior to other classes and had formed themselves into a sacerdotal organization. Thus, well-marked status-groups within a society, distinguished from one another by rights and disabilities, separated from one another by the absence of freedom of inter-marriage, may be considered to be a common characteristic of the social picture of the Indo-European cultures.

Does Ghurye's analysis prove that caste is not a unique Indian phenomenon but it is found in other cultures too? The answer can be seen in the viewpoints of Hocart, Bougle and Srinivas who consider caste as a unique phenomenon in India because of its religious significance. Srinivas (1962) writes that the concept of pollution governs relations between different castes. This concept is absolutely fundamental to the caste system and along with the concepts of *karma and dharma*, it contributes to make caste the unique institution it is. Bougle (1958:29; Dipankar Gupta, *Social Stratification*, 1991: 73) writes that the caste system penetrates Hindu society to a level unknown elsewhere. It plays some part in other civilizations but in India it has invaded the whole. It is in this sense that we may speak of the caste system as a phenomenon peculiar to India.

## Notes

Hocart (1950:45) maintains that castes are merely families to whom various offices in the ritual are assigned by heredity. Senart (Caste in *India*, 1930: 26) feels that caste is peculiar to India since it is determined by ethnological, economic, geographical and psychological conditions which are essentially native. Hutton (1961:46) also refers to its uniqueness due to its complex origin. He writes that caste appears to be an institution of highly complex origin, an origin so complex indeed that in its very nature it must be limited to a single area; and that no doubt is why it is found only in India. Harold Gould (1986:33) has said: "Caste in its fullest sense is an exclusively Indian phenomenon"

Some people feel that the uniqueness of caste can be discussed by analyzing whether in India itself, caste is confined to Hindu religious faith or is found among other religious groups too. William Crook (1896) believes that it will be a graver misconception to suppose that caste is peculiar to Hinduism and connected in some peculiarly intimate way with the Hindu faith. R.K. Mukherjee (1957: 67) also believes that the caste system is a typical Indian institution rather than being a peculiarity of any religious group pertaining to the Indian society. But one opinion is that culturally speaking, caste is a typical Hindu institution. The main religious groups in India, besides Hindus, are Muslims, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs. Now, if the caste system is found among Jains and Sikhs, it is because basically they are Hindus. The endogamous and closed rank groups of Shias and Sunnis among Muslims and Protestants and Catholics among Christians have nothing to do with religion as castes amongst Hindus are linked. What, therefore, gives a unique touch to caste in Hindu society is its linking with certain theological ideas such as pollution, rebirth, *pap* (sin), *punya* (merit), *karma*, *dharma* etc. This orthodox pattern is nowhere accepted except in the Hindu society. An attempt made by scholars like Davis and Gardner (*Socio-Anthropological Study of Caste and Class*, 1968: 16) to prove the existence of the concept of purity and pollution in a country like America by referring to the story of a Negro woman washing to return the coat purchased from a white man's shop and the refusal of the sales girl to accept it back is only suggestive of the prevalence of the concept of 'uncleanliness' and not pollution. It may, therefore, be held that caste system is not only a unique Indian phenomenon but a unique Hindu phenomenon too. In describing it as a unique phenomenon, we must search for the most essential principle in it. And, this principle could only be one of 'purity and pollution' which is found only amongst the Hindus. Hocart (1950: 46) also maintains that once we have divested ourselves of preconceived notions we must recognize that caste derives from some essential principle and we should search for that principle not in our minds but in the minds of those people who practise caste system, have daily experience of it, and are thus most likely to have a feeling for what is most essential in it. This belief in the uniqueness of caste system in Hindu society tears Risley's theory who explains the origin of caste only in terms of racial factors or conquests. Ghurye, Majumdar, Hutton, Mukherjee, etc. are perfectly correct in accepting racial factor as one factor rather than the factor in the origin of caste.

## Occupational Theory

Nesfield, the propounder of this theory and his supporter Denzil Ibbetson believed that the origin of caste has nothing to do with racial affinity or religion but it is mainly due to functions or occupations. Nesfield (*Brief View of the Caste System of the North Western Provinces and Oudh*, 1885: 88) maintains that the technical skill of the occupation was passed on hereditarily from generation to generation and because of practising the same occupation over a long period of time, 'occupational guilds' came into existence which later on came to be known as castes. The hierarchy in the caste system, according to him, was the result of the feeling of the superiority and inferiority of occupations. He holds that the rank of any caste as high or low depends upon whether the industry represented by the caste belongs to an advanced or backward stage of culture. He gives the example of artisans working in metals ranking themselves higher than the basket-makers and other primitive callings which do not involve the use of metals. Explaining how the Brahmins got the highest status in the collective caste hierarchy, he says Brahmins were specialized in the 'occupation' of sacrifices and hymns and rituals. Since sacrifices were very important in the social life of the people, Brahmins became the most important and respected people in the society. Brahmin was thus the first born of castes, the model upon which all the other castes were subsequently formed (*Ibid*: 171-172). However, in the beginning, priesthood was not an exclusive monopoly of the Brahmins. It was only when they organized themselves as an exclusive privileged class that priesthood became hereditary. And that was the reason, other groups

in the community, by way of precaution, for the sake of defence and privileges, organized themselves into different castes. Thus, it was partly defence motive and partly imitation that other castes became hereditary. In other words, Nesfield attributes the origin of castes to two things: (i) occupation, and (ii) organization of the tribe.

Supporting Nesfield, Denzil Ibbetson (*Punjab Castes*, 1916) also explains the origin of castes as the result of interaction of three forces: (i) tribe, (ii) guilds, and (iii) religion. He says that tribes developed as occupational guilds and they came to function on religious lines and thus developed as castes in the process of social evolution.

Many scholars have, however, criticized Nesfield's and Ibbetson's theories. Senart poses a question that since many castes are engaged not in one but many occupations, how do they take their names? Is it from their dominant occupation? In Russia, Senart (*Caste in India*, 1930) claims that there are many villages in which total population is engaged in same occupation; for example, shoe-making or pottery etc. These villages are not assemblies of groups who have merged themselves into a community but they are communities which pursue a single industry. It is not occupation which results in grouping but grouping which results in community of occupation. Why should it not be the same in India?

D.N. Majumdar (1952: 292) has also criticized Nesfield's idea of the hierarchy of castes in terms of the superiority or the inferiority of the occupations. He maintains that the status of castes depends not on the superiority or the inferiority of occupation but upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the groups. Hutton (1961: 43) too believes that Nesfield's occupational theory does not explain the social status of various agricultural castes. One agricultural caste in North India has higher status but the same caste in South India has a different status. Scholars have criticized Nesfield's theory of 'defence mechanism' also because it is certainly not accountable in the case of Vaishyas and Sudras.

In spite of all this criticism, we cannot completely reject the occupational theory. It has some sociological significance. Sociologically speaking, the study of caste groups is the study of particular aspect of social stratification and every human society comes to be stratified into various groups when work becomes specialized and the number of occupational roles becomes so great that no discrimination can be made between each for purposes of assigning rewards and prestige. People and their kin having similar occupational roles interact with one another freely and frequently. These people together come to form what Harold Gould (*The Economic Weekly*, 1961) has called 'sub-cultural groups', each with different standard of living, moral outlook, socialization pattern type, and level of education, etc. These sub-cultural groups called 'castes' in India are thus in fact the occupational groups with ascribed status. They became rigid in our society because of two reasons. Our society with non-industrial civilization had ascription-oriented stratification in which the role and the role-occupant remain merged. This is because in non-industrial civilization, technology is based upon manual and animal energy and productive activities are performed in kinship groups. This means that occupations are part of the intrafamilial socialization process and are thus internalized as an intrinsic part of the parent-child relationship. Occupations are 'inherited' at birth, are believed to be transmitted in the 'blood line' and are, therefore, seen as part of the person himself. This is particularly true with reprehensible and sacerdotal occupations. This process of 'internalization' of occupation checked social mobility. Coupled with the religious concept of ceremonial purity, it further led to the development of static features of our social system. When there is change from non-industrial civilization to industrial civilization, old pattern is also carried over to new changed period. Hence, caste, which originated so many centuries ago, is still found in modern India. However, as industrialization in our society will reach advanced stages of development, these castes, that is 'occupational groups with ascribed status', will tend to be reduced in their importance. We may thus accept Nesfield's occupational factor as one important factor in the origin of caste instead of completely rejecting the theory.

### **Ketkar's Theory**

Ketkar (1909: 16-28) traces the origin of castes from the early tribes and the psychological prejudicial tendencies of human-beings. He believes that castes are developed tribes or converted classes. Numerous tribes which were living in different parts of India existed as different units and after the

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custom of endogamy was introduced, they did not fuse (as European tribes had done). Many of these tribes were in struggle with each other because their heads had quarrelled either over boundaries or because a person from one tribe had kidnapped a girl from other tribe. Because of these conflicts, people avoided other tribes in marriage and social relations, etc. and confined social interaction in all respects to the members of their own tribes. Ketkar (*Ibid*: 26-30) further maintains that instead of talking of 'origin of the caste system', we should talk of 'origin of various features of castes' because each characteristic has a history of origin behind it but not the caste system as a whole, which came to have different features in the process of its development, that is, in about 3,000 years. Thus, according to him, the phrase 'origin of caste' has no meaning, though endogamy has its origin, hereditary occupation and commensality restrictions have their origin, ascendancy of the priests and their exclusiveness have their origin, association of purity and impurity to various objects also has its origin. Thus, each of these various phenomena can have an origin but the origin of caste system cannot be conceived of as long as these words (that is, castes) remain a collective expression (*Ibid*: 18).

Ketkar then proceeds to give what he calls the 'psychological' explanation of each characteristic. He starts with the psychology of the most important element of endogamy in the caste system. Endogamy, he maintains, came to be practised because of three factors: (i) due to the feelings of sympathy and affection for the members of one's own group, (ii) to maintain blood purity, and (iii) because it makes social adjustment with the partner easier (*Ibid*: 27-29). Even Westermarck (1891: 362) has said that sympathy strengthens affection and affection strengthens sympathy and same culture, mode of life and sentiments, etc. strengthen sympathy and affection. Feeling of superiority and inferiority, according to Ketkar (*Ibid*: 29) is either the cause or the result of endogamy. A race of people which regards itself as superior to another will not intermarry with one that is thought inferior. When Indians first migrated to Africa, they did not marry the natives because they considered themselves superior to them. Similarly, Chinese, after migration to America, had also confined their marital relations to their own community as they were filled with prejudice against the white people. Before the migration, Indians and Chinese had no such feelings of superiority. This is the psychology of hierarchy or superiority-inferiority due to endogamy. Referring to the pre-eminent position of priests (Brahmins) in the caste system, Ketkar (*Ibid*: 30) holds that the supermacy of the priests is not confined to India but has been accepted in every society. Giving the high status to Brahmins amongst the Hindus is, therefore, not a surprising phenomenon. Psychologically analyzing the restrictions on social inter-action, Ketkar points out that if an individual can degrade himself in his own caste by deviating from the caste norms, why cannot a caste degrade itself in society when all its members deviate from caste norms or by taking to a 'degrading' occupation or by permitting the use of wine and meat, or social customs like polygamy, bride-price and marrying a girl at a high age? Degraded people and groups are always looked at with contempt. Therefore, if one caste imposed restrictions on interaction with 'such degrading' castes, what is wrong in it? But since these rules are not universal and some castes are more tolerant than others, therefore some castes, deviating from social norms, get a lower status but not all castes. The rules differ from locality to locality (*Ibid*: 19-21). Lastly, talking of the authority of the caste councils, Ketkar maintains that it is natural for every group to think of creating some institution to exercise control over its members. The origin of caste panchayats, therefore, is also a natural phenomenon.

Ketkar's theory needs critical evaluation. His main contention that castes originated from tribes was perhaps a corollary of Rice's totemistic theory (1829) according to which castes originated from belief in totems and taboos. B.S. Guha (1924) also had advanced a theory somewhat similar to that of Rice. Bannerjee too (1930) had explained caste as due to primitive belief in magic. Accepting the origin of castes from tribes would mean accepting the fact that caste system was evolved not by the Aryans but by the native Dravidians on aborigines. Though scholars like Slator (1929) and Pargitor (1922) did believe that caste is essentially Dravidian and it was adopted by the semi-civilized Aryans but history can definitely be cited as a proof that the caste system did not exist in pre-Vedic period but it evolved only in the post-Vedic period, that is, tribals in the pre-Vedic period can under no circumstances be held responsible for the creation of castes. Ketkar's thesis that restrictions on social interaction with other tribes were the result of intertribal conflicts has also no basis because in that case how can we explain the restrictions on marriage and eating and drinking, etc. with tribes with whom one had no



conflicts at all. The psychological evaluation of the origin of various characteristics, however, has some logic behind it. But nevertheless, we cannot ignore the role of religious and socio-political factors in their origin. The psychological factors referred to by Ketkar are common to all human-beings. What, therefore, lies at the root of the caste system is much more than the psychological traits of man's character. Brahmins's concept of ceremonial purity and Vedic Aryan's idea of preserving their racial superiority were definitely the important factors in the origin of castes.

### Senart's Theory

Senart (*Caste in India*, 1930) seeks the origin of the caste system to the Aryan sources. He holds that the characteristics of the caste system form part of usage and tradition common to all branches of the Aryan race, and these common characteristics, according to him, are: the jurisdiction which somewhat tyrannically regulates private life, marriage, food and ceremonial usages, the habitual practice of certain special cults, and the corporate organization. Indians, Greek and Romans are all Aryans and their civilizations are the oldest ones (*Ibid*: 176). Senart finds certain similarities in the three systems. As we have three important groups, namely, family, *gotra* and caste in India, we have gens, curia and tribe in Rome; and family, phratia and phyle in Greece. Just as *gotra* is an exogamous group in India, gens in Rome and phratia in Greece also confine their marriages to their own groups. Both Indian Brahmins and Roman Patricians enjoy the hypergamous rights of marriage. Just as in India there is a custom that after marriage woman transfers from her *gotra* to that of her husband's, the same custom exists in Rome also in Roman confarratio. The *hukka-pani band* custom (ex-communication) in India can similarly be compared with the 'interdict aquaet igni' custom in Rome. And lastly, just as caste panchayats exist in India and its head (sarpanch) is an all powerful man, in Rome and Greece too there are similar councils with similar powers. On the basis of this comparison, Senart maintains that caste is the normal development of ancient Aryan institutions. In India, however, caste assumed a peculiar form because of the peculiar conditions.

But scholars like Dahlmann and Narmadeshwar Prasad have criticized Senart's thesis. Narmadeshwar Prasad (1956: 27) maintains that it is difficult to agree with Senart because the historical parallels given by him do not explain the origin. He holds that the caste system in India did not exist in the ancient period as claimed by Senart but it was the development of Brahmin period. But Narmadeshwar Prasad's criticism is perhaps inoperative because Senart himself has accepted this idea that the caste system did not exist in the Vedic period. In the preface of his book (1930: xiv), he has written that there is no allusion to caste in the Vedic hymns; it did not exist, therefore, in the period when these were composed. Its beginnings are shown in the literature of the *Brahmanas*. Dahlman's main arguments against Senart's theory are that: (i) the origin of caste cannot be explained only in terms of religious elements. Such a complex institution must be the result of multiple forces; and (ii) caste has been confused with *gotra*.

### Hutton's Theory of Mana

Hutton (1961) has emphasized on the primitive conception *mana* in the formation of castes, a factor which has been endorsed by Roy, Rice and Smart also. According to Hutton (1961: 184-185), *mana* is a mysterious impersonal power attached to individuals, objects and places. It is believed to have powers to harm people. Wherever the belief in *mana* prevails, a corresponding belief in the value of taboo as a protective measure is also to be found. Taboos were, therefore, imposed on commensality, inter-marriage and interaction, etc. to save the members of one's tribe from the *mana* of the other tribes. Hutton (*Ibid*: 185) holds that the tribals consider the food of strangers as dangerous. The restriction on sharing food with others and having contacts with them is based on the belief that these (food and contacts) may be infected with the dangerous soul-matter of strangers. This soul-matter is particularly perilous if such strangers have magical powers. It is such beliefs that led to the origin of the commensal taboo. In his study of Nagas in 1923-24, Hutton found villages which not only objected to accepting presents or money from the strangers or to parting with any possession to them for fear of the influence to which they might thus become subject by proxy as it were, but which



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actually destroyed mats or other property lent to visitors when they had used them and had gone. Like commensal taboo, other taboos also were imposed to save people from the *mana*. Hutton (*Ibid*: 189) further points out that the *mana* principle appears in other religions also. In Buddhist religion, it appears as *iddhi*, in Islamic beliefs as *kudrat*, and in Hinduism it is familiar as *shakti*. It seems likely, however, that it was largely the social and political impact of the Rig Vedic invaders with their definitely graded social classes that was responsible for introducing the principle of social precedence into a society already divided into groups isolated by taboos.

D.N. Majumdar (1952) has criticized Hutton's explanation of caste in terms of *mana*. He maintains that though tribes in other societies also believe in *mana* but we do not find caste system there. In India, it is the result of racial differences and racial conflicts. But it will be erroneous to think that Hutton has explained the origin of caste only in terms of belief in *mana*. In fact, he considers caste as an outcome of interaction of a number of geographical, social, political, religious and economic factors not elsewhere found in conjunction. He writes (*Ibid*: 188): "It is not suggested that the caste system has developed from ideas of *mana*, magic and taboo alone; only that without these ideas, it could not have developed." Identifying these factors, he (*Ibid*: 190-191) has referred to factors like the ideas of pollution, clash of races, racial conquests and colour prejudices, clash of antagonistic cultures, guilds and associations of trades and crafts, deliberate economic and administrative policies, exploitation by intellectuals, geographical isolation of the Indian peninsula, belief in reincarnation and magic and so on. He has thus supported the multiple factor theory of scholars like S.C. Roy. Roy (*Man in India*, Vol. 17, No. 4: 254) holds that caste is an outcome of the interaction between the Indo-Aryan *varna* system on the one hand and the tribal system of the pre-Dravidian and the occupational class system of the Dravidian on the other. These were cemented in the caste system by the Indo-Aryan concept of *karma* and a certain taboo holiness that came to be attached to the Brahmin for his accredited possession of a special spiritual energy. R.K. Mukherjee (1957: 61) also writes that several factors working conjointly led in course of time to the emergence of the Indian caste system.

We may now conclude the discussion on the origin of castes. Accepting the multiple-factor approach, it may be maintained that the superiority feeling of the Vedic Aryans over the natives due to the racial differentiation, occupational distinctiveness, the monopolistic priesthood of Brahmins, and the religious ideas of ceremonial purity and pollution first applied to Sudras (native aboriginals) in connection with the sacrificial ritual and then expanded and extended to other groups because of the theoretical impurity of certain occupations were the important factors in the origin of the caste system in India. The geographical and the philosophical, etc. factors though important yet cannot be given too much weight in the interpretation of caste. The fissiparous tendency of groups and the spirit of unity and we-feeling in each caste was fostered by the socio-political factors like lack of rigid military control of the state, the unwillingness of the rulers to enforce a uniform standard of law and custom, their readiness to recognize the varying customs of different groups as valid, and their tendency of allowing things some-how to adjust themselves. All these factors encouraged the formation of castes based on petty distinctions.

## 6.5 Dominant Caste

The concept of 'dominant caste' was propounded by M.N. Srinivas. It was for the first time appeared in his essay on the social system of a Mysore village. While constructing the concept, perhaps Srinivas was unconsciously influenced by African studies on the dominant clan and dominant lineage. Srinivas developed the concept in his study of Rampura village which is a little away from Mysore city in Karnataka state. Srinivas, in fact, wanted to give a comprehensive study of Rampura. To write down the details of the village he had gone to Stanford for writing down a monograph on Rampura. But there "by a strange quirk of fate all the three copies of my fieldwork notes, processed over a period of eighteen years" were destroyed when a fire took place in his Stanford office. Everything was destroyed for Srinivas. Whatever he remembered about Rampura, later on came in the form of *The Remembered Village* (1976).

The definition of 'dominant caste' has undergone some change over a period of time. Srinivas worked in Rampura in 1948. His finding was first reported in 1955. He defined the concept as below:

The concept of dominant caste which has emerged in recent socio-logical research is important in this connection. A caste is dominant when wields economic or political power and occupies a fairly high position in hierarchy (even in the traditional system of a caste which acquired economic and political power did succeed in improving its ritual status).

Srinivas says that the existence of dominant caste is not particular to Rampura only. It is found in other villages of the country also. For instance, in Mysore villages, Lingayat and Okkaliga; in Andhra Pradesh, Reddy and Kamma; in Tamilnadu, Gounder, Padayachi and Mudaliar; in Kerala, Nayar; in Maharashtra, Maratha; in Gujarat, Patidar; and in northern India, Rajput, Jat, Giar and Ahir are dominant castes. Traditionally, numerically small castes owning land in rural areas or wielding political power or inheriting a literary tradition, were able to dominate the villages. Srinivas has provided historical reasons for the power exercised by the traditional higher castes. He says that the traditional high castes had influence because of western education and the benefits which they conferred.

Earlier, numerical strength of a caste was not much important.

But with the coming of adult suffrage and the reservation given to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, numerical strength has assumed importance. Srinivas writes:

Nowadays, with the coming of adult suffrage, numerical strength has become very important and the leaders of the dominant castes help the political parties to secure votes. But the traditional forms of dominance have not entirely disappeared and neither has dominance shifted fully to the numerically strongest caste, there is no doubt, however, that there is a shift and this traditional phase is marked by inter-group tensions. But what is significant from our point of view is that in many parts of India there are castes which are *decisively* dominant.

It was in 1962 that M.N. Srinivas specified the following three characteristics of a dominant caste:

1. A caste dominates when it wields economic and political power.
2. It has a high rank in caste hierarchy.
3. Numerical strength.

The earlier definition of dominant caste was reviewed by writers of several village studies. Srinivas also looked into the field and the comments made by the others. In 1966, he reviewed his earlier definition which runs below:

For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizable amount of the arable land locally available, have strength of numbers, and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy. When a caste has all the attributes of dominance, it may be said to enjoy a decisive dominance.

### Characteristics

On the basis of the definitions of dominant caste given by Srinivas and the comments offered by other sociologists, a construct could be made which includes the ideal type of dominant caste.

#### 1. Economic and political power

The power of a particular caste lies in the owning of land. The caste which has larger portion of the land in the village wields greater power. First, his agricultural income increases. The size of the land is also related to irrigation. In case of larger landowning and adequate irrigation facilities, naturally, the wields of the casteman increase. Second, the larger landowning caste also provides jobs to the landless farmers and marginal farmers. Such a situation renders the superordinated landless labourers as the 'servants' of the large landowning caste. These castes also apply modern techniques of agriculture such as chemical manure, improved implements and new patterns of cropping.

Yogendra Singh (1994) observes that the social anthropologists have found the presence of dominant castes in most of the south Indian villages. The basic determinant of a dominant caste is

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the superior economic status, especially in land. In the south Indian villages, for instance, Brahmin and Okkaliga are dominant castes. "The Havik Brahmins in village Toltagadde in Malau area of Mysore and Smarth Brahmins in the Kumbapettai village in Tanjore (Tamilnadu) have been observed to be dominant castes. Okkaliga are dominant in the village Rampura, Wangala and Delana studied in Mysore".

Putting his analysis of dominant castes, Yogendra Singh observes: An interesting common factor which plays a very significant role in the dominance of these castes in the villages ... is their superior economic status, specially in land. Brahmins in Toltagadde have ownership of all cash crop land; Kumbapettai Brahmins traditionally controlled all land; Okkaligas in Wangala; and Delanas control more than 80 per cent of land; Rajputs in Senapur, eastern UP control 82 per cent of land in the village; and the Vaghela Rajputs in Cassandra village in Gujarat have control over all the land in the village. In all these villages the degree of dominance of these castes is high.

Higher education is also accepted by the big landowning castes. Administrative and income generated in urban areas have also given economic power to these caste groups. Besides economic power, namely, agriculture and jobs in administration, the big landowning castes have increased their prestige and power because of their role in Panchayati Raj. Srinivas says that "the introduction of adult franchise and Panchayati Raj has resulted in giving a new sense of self-respect to the villagers". Srinivas argues that the economic and political power which has come to the big landowning castes has thus enhanced their power status.

**2. High rank in caste hierarchy**

Normally, the caste which is traditionally higher in the caste hierarchy enjoys the status of dominance. The Brahmins and the Rajputs have traditionally been dominant in the villages. The Brahmins have at the top of the caste hierarchy and they officiate at the religious festivals and rituals of the village. The Rajputs have been the feudals-*thakurs* in the village. They have traditionally occupied larger portions of the village land. The economic and political power, thus, in the village has given the dominant status to the Brahmins and Rajputs.

Recently, the criterion, namely, economic and political power, has undergone a change. The reservations made for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women have given a new attribute to the concept of dominant caste. As a result provision power has passed into the hands of numerically large landowning peasant castes. Some of the scheduled castes, who are numerically strong and also take advantage of the new educational and other opportunities available to them, have also gained economic and political power. The high rank in the caste hierarchy has now gone in favour of those castes which have benefited from their reserved status. Now, the traditional higher status in the hierarchy no more remains an attribute of a dominant caste.

**3. Numerical strength**

Before the advent of modernisation and development, numerical strength did not have any strength of the dominance of a caste. Recently, numerical strength of a caste assumes importance because of the vote bank created by adult suffrage. The castes which have larger number of voters, naturally, determine the fate of a candidate contesting elections. What is called these days as caste-war is actually the importance of a caste to determine the fate of a candidate.

Now, a caste is dominant not only in single village. It extends to a cluster of villages. A caste group which has only a family or two in a particular village but which enjoys decisive dominance in the wider region, will still count locally because of the network of ties binding it to its dominant relatives. What is equally important is that others in the village will be aware of the existence of this network. Contrariwise, a caste which enjoys dominance in only one village will find that it has to reckon with the caste which enjoys regional dominance.

**4. A sizeable amount of the arable land**

Normally, in India's villages, smaller number of big landowners occupy larger portion of land. In other words, the caste which has larger portion of village land wields power. The big landowners, thus, are patrons of the bulk of the poor villagers. In villages, those castes which have larger portion of land, enjoy power and prestige. Srinivas says that landownership is a crucial factor in establishing a dominance. He observes:

Landownership confers not only power but prestige, so much so that, individuals who have made good in any walk of life tend to invest in land. If landownership is not always an indispensable passport to high rank, it certainly facilitates upward mobility.

## Criticism

The decades of 1950s and 1960s in the field of rural sociology witnessed a keen competition between those who preferred Redfield's approach to village studies and Radcliffe-Brown's analysis of functional analysis. Despite differences in their approach, both the camps focused on culture. Later on Louis Dumont stressed the importance of culture and caste as determining variables in the study of Indian civilisation as a whole.

The concept of 'dominant caste', it is argued, has emerged out of the African studies on dominant class. When Srinivas put forward the concept of dominant caste, it was seriously commented upon by sociologists and social anthropologists. As a matter of fact, during 1950s and 1960s, the academic environment in the country, in rural sociology and social anthropology, was charged by studies on caste and village communities. Some of the criticisms of the concept have relevance even today in our understanding of rural society. These criticisms are enumerated below:

### 1. Dominant caste today is found only in traditional villages

Srinivas has argued that a dominant caste has most of the power in the village within its fold. In fact, it is the dominant caste which runs the village; maintains the village system.

The empirical reality today has undergone vast transformation. Surely, in the past, the powerful families in the village were the big landowning families. The Brahmins and the Rajputs, in the earlier periods of history, got immense favour from the feudal lords and the British rulers. In order to keep these higher castes in favour of the ruling group land was given as gift. Those who received such favours included Brahmins, Rajputs and the Marathas. Viewed from this perspective admittedly, the Brahmins and the Rajputs became big landowning castes.

But, with the land reforms including land ceiling and abolition of *jamindari* and *jagirdari*, big landowning has ceased to be a determinant factor of dominant caste. In place of big landholding, political power has become a decisive factor in the formation of a dominant caste. Andre Beteille very rightly observes:

The powerful families in the past were the big landowning families. These included the principal Brahmin families among non-Brahmins, the Maratha family. Today political power whether in the village or outside it is not as closely tied to ownership of land as it was in the past. New bases of power have emerged which are, to some extent, independent of both caste and class. Perhaps most important among these is the strength of numerical support.

D.N. Majumdar, who conducted the study of Monana village of Uttar Pradesh in 1958, observes that the Brahmin and the Thakur were the dominant castes in Mohana. But, at a later stage, he finds that the dominance of the Thakur group has begun to be shaken up, ever since the legal removal of its economic pillar—the *jamindari* system— which was the strong medium through which it held the various other castes in a position of economic subordination... But Majumdar also finds that with the abolition of *jamindari*, much of the economic power of the Thakur is retained. He says that "with their wide moneylending business they still are a powerful group".

If economic power is considered to be an important factor of the formation of a dominant caste, it is only limited to the traditional villages, such as, that of tribals which have not received the impact of modern political 'transformation.

### 2. Dominant caste is not always numerically a preponderant caste

Yet another criticism of dominant caste falls into two camps. One camp of scholars argues that in traditional villages it is not the numerical strength but secular power and ritual status that determine the status of a dominant caste. Among those who stand for this argument include D.N. Majumdar and others. However, the second group consisting of Andre Beteille, M.N. Srinivas and Yogendra Singh has advanced the idea of ritual and secular status of a caste as dominant. This group asserts an empirical evidence that nowadays "with the coming of adult suffrage, numerical strength has become very important and the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have assumed a greater importance".

## Notes

Majumdar does not consider numerical strength as a decisive factor in the formation of a dominant caste. Historically, "Indian villages probably never exercised majority rule or accepted majority verdict. The feudal India did not compromise with numerical strength. Besides, alone-Brahmin, a *sadhu*, a *jamindar*, alone social worker—each has exercised more influence than a numerically preponderant community in the village". Majumdar denies the idea that scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, though, having numerical strength may occupy a status of dominant caste. According to him, "the backward classes, scheduled castes preponderate in many villages, even a particular caste like the *Lodha* or the *Pasi* may be numerically the largest caste in a village, but authority and importance may attach to the few upper castes families, or to the *jamindar* family, i.e., the social matrix of India village".

Thus, on one hand, it is argued that numerical strength has ceased to be a factor in the making of a dominant caste while it is also held on the basis of empirical strength that the modern forces of democracy and development including the improvement of the status of scheduled groups have gone a long way in making a group dominant in a village.

### 3. Dominant caste is a part of structuralist approach

Most of the criticism labelled against the dominant caste is that of those theorists who oppose structuralist approach in the study of Indian society. Louis Dumont is the leader of this approach. M.N. Srinivas, while giving the concept of dominant caste, also follows the line of a structuralist. Srinivas stands for hierarchy, i.e., the opposition between pure and impure. He looks at the pure caste, namely, Brahmins and Rajputs as the higher castes in the caste system, he has taken upper caste view in the construction of dominant caste. This perspective of Srinivas has been criticised by Edmund Leach. In fact, Srinivas has overlooked the force of history when he writes:

Historical data are neither as accurate nor as rich and detailed as the data collected by field anthropologists, and the study of certain existing processes in the past.

The making of a dominant caste, thus, is highly empirical and does not take into consideration the forces of history. A cursory view of the contemporary rural India would immediately show that much of the relevance of dominant caste has fallen into erosion. As a matter of fact, there has been sea-change in the social reality of Indian villages that much cannot be comprehended with the help of this concept. The reservation given to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the intensification of democratisation, and the introduction of Panchayati Raj through 73rd amendment to Indian Constitution have gone a long way in shrinking the influence of dominant caste. However, there are some politically dominant groups which have begun to exercise influence on the villagers.

## 6.6 Inter-Caste and Intra-Caste Relations

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### Inter-caste Relations

For analyzing the inter-caste relations, castes may be divided into three groups: clean castes (Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasths, Jats, etc.), unclean castes (Teli, Dhobi, Nai, Kumhar, Lohar, etc.), and untouchable castes (Bhangi, Chamar, Pasi, etc). The relations among these castes may be studied at four levels—commensal relations, marital relations, occupational relations, and social relations. At each level, the relations may be perceived as traditional and as changing relations.

### Commensal Relations

Commensal relations refer to a caste/person with whom a man will eat. In daily relations, persons accept food only from the members of their own caste. The question of commensal relations arises only on occasions of feasts. The usual practice on such occasions is that even though members of different castes are invited, it does not mean that they take food together. Members of clean castes sit in one row (*pangat*), while members of unclean castes occupy another row. Several feet of open ground are left between the two rows. K.S. Mathur (1964:126-127) has pointed out some exceptions in which clean and unclean caste members sit in the same row. While the members of clean castes are eating, the members of untouchable castes will not sit with them. When commensal circle is narrow, dietary relations are spread to wide area.



## Notes

Dietary relations refer to sharing food, smoking, and drinking. A member of a high caste does not take water from the *lota* (vessel) used by the member of a low caste unless washed with sand or ashes. For sharing *hooka* (hubble-bubble), the rules are similar to those as for accepting the food. Regarding eating with others, there are separate taboos for eating *kachcha* food, *pucca* food, and green vegetables and fruits with peelable skins. The *kachcha* food is regarded as pure (because it is cooked in water and salt); hence it is highly pollutable. The *pucca* food is regarded as less pollutable as it is cooked with *ghee*. The green fruits and vegetables are regarded least pollutable. While there is one-way acceptance of *kachcha* food (that is, members of clean castes do not accept *kachcha* food from the members of the unclean or the untouchable castes), there is two-way acceptance of *pucca* food. Thus, the dietary relations depend upon: (i) the ritual status of the giver and the acceptor, and (ii) the ritual purity of the type of food given or accepted.

K.S. Mathur (1964) in his study of a multi-caste village divided the castes into five groups. Groups I, II, and III consisted of clean castes, Group IV of unclean castes, and Group V of untouchable castes. The following diagram shows the commensal relations among the five groups:

Diagram 1

Structure of clean and unclean castes and commensal relations among various castes in five groups in a multi-caste village studied by K.S. Mathur

Group I Brahmins					
Rajput	Group II (Nine Castes)	Baniya	Nai	Group III (Five Castes)	Lohar
Jogi	Group IV (Nine Castes)			Group V (Four Castes)	Bhangi
			Chamar		

D.N. Majumdar (1958) also studied commensal relations among various castes in a village Mohana, near Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh in 1955. The village consisted of 112 houses with a total population of 806 persons belonging to fifteen castes. Of the total (112) families, 23.5 per cent were Chamar, 21.5 per cent Thakur, 18.5 per cent Pasi, 10.8 per cent Ahir, 5.8 per cent Kumhar, 5.6 per cent Dhobi, and 3.1 per cent Nai. The remaining eight castes (Barhai, Kalwar, Gadaria, Lohar, Brahmin, Bhaksar, Khatik and Kurmi) consisted of 0.1 per cent to 2.5 per cent of the families each. All castes, except Bhaksar, depended for their livelihood on agriculture either directly or indirectly. Thakurs possessed 41.3 per cent of the total land in the village, Pasis 15.0 per cent, Chamars 12.6 per cent, Ahirs 9.4 per cent and Kumhars 8.5 per cent.

The hierarchical structure of various castes is shown in the following diagram:

Diagram 2

Hierarchical structure of castes in Mohana Village in Uttar Pradesh studied by D.N. Majumdar

Brahmin		Thakur
Ahir	Gadari	Kurmi
Lohar	Kumhar	Barhai
	Nai/Khatik/Kalwar	
Pasi	Chamar, Bhaksor	Dhobi

Majumdar found that Brahmins accepted *seedha* (raw food) from other castes; Ahirs did not accept *kachcha* food even from Thakurs; Thakurs took water from the hands of Ahirs but Ahirs did not accept water from Thakurs' hands.

## Notes

Studying attitudes towards inter-caste commensal relations, Kuppuswami studied 188 Brahmins and 290 non-Brahmins in South India in 1956. He found that 81.8 per cent respondents were prepared to inter-dine with anyone irrespective of caste considerations, 12.5 per cent favoured inter-dining with all castes except Harijans, and 3.8 per cent desired sharing food only with own caste members.

B. V. Shah (1968) in his study of two hundred students in Gujarat on the analysis of attitudes towards inter-dining found that 13.5 per cent were against inter-dining; 54.0 per cent were against inter-dining in the presence of parents; 14.0 per cent said that they would dine only with such lower castes as have minimum cultural differences with them; and 18.5 per cent were prepared to set aside the traditional taboos, even within the knowledge of their parents.

Talking of commensal relations in 1955, Kapadia (1959:74) said: "It is true that even in the rural areas, inter-dining, where members of all castes sit together in a row, is not unknown today. But at the same time, there is evidence to indicate that these inhibitions are not completely uprooted psychologically even in the urban areas." Kapadia, therefore, raised a question whether it will be a proper and adequate basis for assuming that commensal taboos have almost died in Hindu society?

These studies were conducted about four decades ago. Since then people in our society have become more liberal and broadminded in their dealings with members of other castes, including unclean castes. So long the members of unclean castes are not engaged in unclean occupations, people do not mind in dining with them. The traditional Hindus (whose number is not large), of course, still believe in observing old taboos in eating and drinking with others.

## Marital Relations

Inter-community and inter-caste marriages have been given legal sanction as well as social approval. Though people do not mind marrying with persons of other castes, yet a large number of people still marry in their own castes. This is perhaps because the marriages of children are still settled by parents and they believe that marital adjustment becomes easier when both partners have a similar social background. There are cases where not only children marry outside their castes but even the parents settle their children's marriages in other castes. The main change is that marriage is considered to be 'more a mutual thing'. A young person today does not emphasize 'caste' factor in mate selection but he/she wants "a partner whom he/she knows and understands and who understands him/her and who can give him/her much more of a sense of fulfilment." Such person may or may not belong to the same caste. Initially, the boys and girls may be studying in the same college or same class or may be working in the same office or living in the same neighbourhood, yet being 'strangers' to one another they want a certain amount of autobiography in the hope of establishing some common interest or experience, at least to prove that one is worthy of the other's attention. But parents still emphasize on *sanskaras* and assume that caste and family background take care of a person's personality and will surely bring the necessary emotional involvement between the two partners after marriage. Thus, though both young and old people express them-selves as not being against having marital relations with persons of other castes but in practice they confine their marriages to their own castes.

About three and a half decades ago, scholars like Kuppuswami, B.V. Shah and Margaret Cormack had found some of their student respondents in favour of inter-caste marriages. Kuppuswami (1957) in a study of 478 students in 1956 had found 68.8 per cent students in favour of inter-caste and inter-subcaste marriages, 22.4 per cent against such marriages, and 8.8 per cent in favour of inter-subcaste marriages but against inter-caste marriages. B.V. Shah (1968) in his study of two hundred students in Gujarat had found 65 per cent respondents in favour of marrying within caste and sub-caste, 26 per cent in favour of inter-caste marriages, and 9 per cent as conditionally in favour of inter-castes marriages. Margaret Cormack in her study of the attitudes of parents of five hundred students of different universities in different states had found 51.2 per cent parents were agreeable to marry their children outside their own castes if they found 'better persons', while 28.5 per cent were totally against inter-caste marriages. Today, perhaps a very large number of persons may be found in favour of inter-caste marriages but, as pointed out earlier, in practice they still seek partners from their own castes.

Thus, young people often act in terms of two conflicting sets of norms – one set explicit and the other set implicit. On the other hand, today's parents have as many misgivings concerning marital relations

outside one's caste as parents a generation ago. The studies demonstrate that most boys and girls feel ill at ease, self-conscious, shy, and frightened in expressing themselves against the wishes of their parents. Consequently, they marry in their own castes, even if they may not be against marrying with a person of other caste.

### Occupational Relations

The occupational relations refer to the exchange of products and services in a regular manner. Since the caste system permits and forbids certain occupations to castes, the traditional specialization determines interdependence of castes. The continuity and change in these contractual group-oriented and long-term bonds between food-producing families and families that supply them with goods and services have been analyzed in the chapter on "Jajmani System".

The best analysis of occupational relations is given by D.N. Majumdar on the basis of his study in Mohana village in Lucknow district in Uttar Pradesh. Diagrams 3 and 4 explain the occupational relations on two occasions of birth and *mundan* (first hair-cut after birth) in a Thakur's family.

### Social Relations

The social relations among castes depend upon the ranking of castes in caste hierarchy. When villagers meet either for council meetings or for gossips, they generally seat themselves with consideration to caste rank. Some sit on the cot and some on the ground. The members of the higher rank castes (Brahmins, Rajputs) sit on the upper part of the cot where one puts the pillow for sleeping while those of the next higher ranks sit at the foot of the cot. The members of the intermediate castes sit on the ground near the cot whereas the members of low caste sit on the

Diagram 3

Occupational Relations with Different Castes at Birth Ceremony in a Thakur's Family

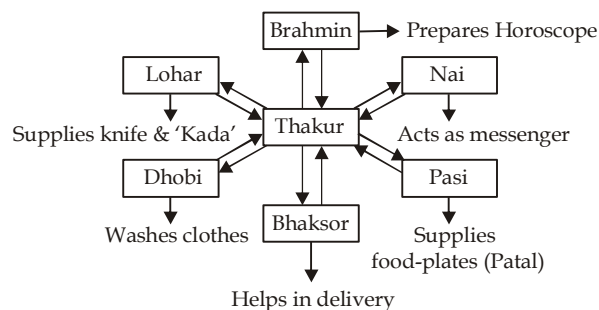
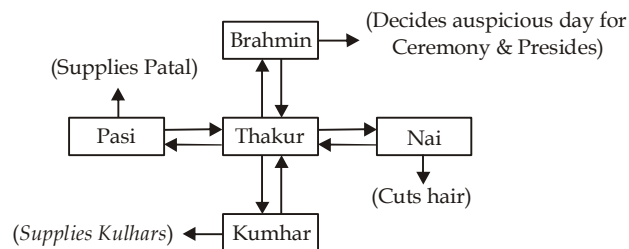


Diagram 4

Occupational Relations with Different Castes at Mundan Ceremony in Thakur's Family



ground far away from the cot. When only men from middle and low castes are present, the middle caste members may sit on the cot but those of the low castes sit on the ground. The seating arrangement also symbolizes authority and power relations. The Brahmins and Rajputs sitting on the cot take lead in the talk and ultimately express the consensus arrived at in the meeting. In those village where the Brahmin caste is small and relatively insignificant, it does not possess power. Similarly, any other high caste in very small minority will have no influential voice in weighty decisions.

**Notes**

The social relations among various castes are assessed not only in terms of seating disparities but also in terms of manner of greetings and salutations and in mixing during festivals. The relations could also be perceived on the basis of caste stereotypes prevalent in the society. Some of these stereotypes are: “Ahir Saath BarasTak Nabalig Hi Rahta Hai” (Ahir remains immatured up to the age of sixty years); “Kayasth Ka Bachcha Kabhi Na Sachcha” (son of a Kayastha can never be truth-ful); “Baitha Baniya Kya Kare Idhar Ka Dhan Udhar Kare” (a Baniya, while sitting, keeps on transferring grains from one place to other), “Kurmi Kisi Ke Liye Vafadar Nahin Ho Sakta” (Kurmi can never be loyal to anybody); “Sabere Teli Ka Munh Dekhne Se Ann Nahin Milta” (one will not get food the whole day if he sees Teli’s face early in the morning). Though these stereotypes are not based on any rational thinking, yet once acquired, they are not easily changed.

The inter-caste relations at various levels have undergone significant changes in the last few decades. The important changes noticed are:

1. Brahmins no longer show any hesitation in accepting *kachcha* food from the low caste people.
2. Rules about seating disparities are fading away.
3. Some low castes now invite Brahmins to participate in their ceremonies.
4. Members of low castes no longer meekly obey the dictations of the members of high castes.
5. Members of low castes no longer perform forced labour (*begar*) for upper castes.

It may be concluded that high caste people are now more tolerant in their attitudes towards low castes, and backward castes are throwing off the fetters with which they were bound few decades ago. The important factors responsible for this change are: contacts with city people; abolition of *zamindarisystem*; reformatory measures adopted by the government; and awareness of rights amongst lower castes.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Fill in the blanks:**

- (i) Smritis was written in .....
- (ii) In the Rigveda only two varnas have been mentioned: Aryavarna and .....
- (iii) Rig Veda was written in about .....
- (iv) Bekanwala is similar to .....
- (v) Namika means .....

**6.7 Summary**

- The caste system in India has been studied with three perspectives: Indological, socio-anthropological and sociological. The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view, social anthropologists from the cultural point of view, and sociologists from the stratificational point of view. The sociological perspective views the caste system in terms of social stratification in a society, and as a phenomenon of social inequality. The interaction is the basis of social structures, and types of interaction along with associated norms categorize social structures.
- The development of the caste system as Indologists and social anthropologists are, or that the social anthropologists do not accept caste as a phenomenon resultant of social stratification as the sociologists do. Both sociologists and social anthropologists study the external (relations of one caste with other castes) and internal aspects (relations with members in the same caste) of the caste system and the state of affairs as a result of the existence of the (caste) system through time. As a unit, caste can be defined as a ‘closed rank status group’, that is, a group in which the status of the members, their occupation, the field of mate-selection, and interaction with others is fixed. As a system, it refers to interrelated statuses and patterned in-teraction among castes in terms of collectivity of restrictions, namely, restrictions on change of membership, occupation, marriage, and commensal relations.

- *Ashram* organization refers to the conduct of an individual in the world (nurture) in different stages of his life and *varna* organization refers to the work that an individual would undertake in the society according to his nature. The approach to the study of these two organizations is different.
- The division of society into four *varna* (or four orders or classes) was based on the division of labour. Brahmins acted as priests, Kshatriyas as rulers and fighters, Vaishyas as traders, and Sudras as a servile class. Each *varna* worshipped different deities and followed different rituals.
- *Varna* means 'colour', and it was in this sense that the word seems to have been employed in contrasting the Arya and the Dasa, referring to their fair and dark colours respectively.
- "The difference in religious practices and techniques reflects the separate existence and history of these entities than serves as cause for their separation from the larger units."
- The three functions performed by sub-castes are: restricting marriages, restricting commensal relations, and regulating behaviour or communal life in terms of subsisting within the larger society. Max Weber (1960: 31) also holds: "Today one caste frequently contains several hundred sub-castes. In such cases, these sub-castes may be related to one another exactly or almost exactly as are different castes. If this is the case, sub-castes in reality are castes; the caste name common to all of them has merely historical significance".
- The third criterion is language difference between a tribe and a caste. It is suggested that each tribe has its own language but not a caste; for example, Gonds speak Gondi language, Bhils speak Bhili or Vagdi language, Santhals speak Santhali language, and so on.
- In India, the situation is even more complicated because there is hardly any tribe which exists as a separate society. No tribe in India has a completely separate political boundary. Big tribes like Bhils, Santhals, Oraon, etc. are territorially dispersed.
- Caste and class are both status groups. A status group is a collection of individuals who share a distinctive style of life and a certain consciousness of kind.
- Three criteria are generally used for determining an individual's position in the class system: objective, reputational, and subjective. The objective criteria are: income, occupation and education; the reputational criteria refer to the attitudes and judgements of other members of the community; and the subjective criteria refer to how people place themselves within the society.
- The structure of caste could be discussed by analyzing its important features. When Bougle (1958) has postulated three elements of caste, namely, hereditary specialization, hierarchy and repulsion or opposition, Hocart (1950) has emphasized on ritual purity and impurity, while Risley (1915) has referred to endogamy and hereditary occupation. Ghurye, Hutton, Ketkar, Dutt, etc. have also pointed out all these features. In giving these features, the scholars have not made distinction between caste as a unit and caste as a system. Keeping this difference in view, it may be maintained that the important features of caste as a unit are hereditary membership, endogamy, fixed occupation, and caste councils; while the features of caste as a system are hierarchy, commensal restrictions, and restrictions with regard to physical and social distance. The slight difference between Marriott's and Freed's procedure was that Marriott presented the cards one by one, while Freed presented them altogether.
- In recent years, though there has been a change in some characteristics of the caste system but there has been no change at all in the hierarchical characteristic. Restrictions on social interaction have been imposed because of the belief that pollution can be carried by mere bodily contact. It is because of such beliefs that the low caste people engaged in inferior occupations are avoided by the upper caste people.
- Castes engaged in defiling or menial or polluting occupations are treated as untouchables. They are called outcastes, depressed classes or scheduled castes. These castes are believed to have descended from the races originally inhabiting India before the invasion of the Aryans. The membership of an individual in a caste is determined by his birth. Since each caste has its own rank in relation to other castes, the high or low status of an individual depends upon the



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ritual status of the caste in which he is born. Tis are treated as untouchable but not the Telis. Telis will outcaste a member who should venture to press it. The change of occupation did not necessarily involve the change of caste unless it involved the change of status. Each caste has a council of its own, known as caste panchayat. This panchayat exercised tremendous power over its members till recently. Our society with non-industrial civilization had ascription-oriented stratification in which the role and the role-occupant remain merged. This is because in non-industrial civilization, technology is based upon manual and animal energy and productive activities are performed in kinship groups.

- The concept of 'dominant caste' was propounded by M.N. Srinivas. It was for the first time appeared in his essay on the social system of a Mysore village. The definition of 'dominant caste' has undergone some change over a period of time. Srinivas worked in Rampura in 1948. His finding was first reported in 1955. Nowadays, with the coming of adult suffrage, numerical strength has become very important and the leaders of the dominant castes help the political parties to secure votes. But the traditional forms of dominance have not entirely disappeared and neither has dominance shifted fully to the numerically strongest caste, there is no doubt, however, that there is a shift and this traditional phase is marked by inter-group tensions. But what is significant from our point of view is that in many parts of India there are castes which are *decisively* dominant. The power of a particular caste lies in the owning of land. The caste which has larger portion of the land in the village wields greater power.
- Higher education is also accepted by the big landowning castes. Administrative and income generated in urban areas have also given economic power to these caste groups. The Brahmins and the Rajputs have traditionally been dominant in the villages. The Brahmins have at the top of the caste hierarchy and they officiate at the religious festivals and rituals of the village. The Rajputs have been the feudals-*thakurs* in the village. The castes which have larger number of voters, naturally, determine the fate of a candidate contesting elections.
- Landownership confers not only power but prestige, so much so that, individuals who have made good in any walk of life tend to invest in land. If landownership is not always an indispensable passport to high rank, it certainly facilitates upward mobility. Dietary relations refer to sharing food, smoking, and drinking. A member of a high caste does not take water from the *lota* (vessel) used by the member of a low caste unless washed with sand or ashes. For sharing *hooka* (hubble-bubble), the rules are similar to those as for accepting the food.
- Inter-community and inter-caste marriages have been given legal sanction as well as social approval. Though people do not mind marrying with persons of other castes, yet a large number of people still marry in their own castes. The occupational relations refer to the exchange of products and services in a regular manner. Since the caste system permits and forbids certain occupations to castes, the traditional specialization determines interdependence of castes.

### 6.8 Key-Words

1. Servile class : Sudra
2. Loins : Thighs
3. Viryam : Strength
4. Pasavah : Cattle wealth

### 6.9 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by caste system?
2. Discuss the role of colonialism in indian caste system.
3. Explain the structural and cultural concept of caste.
4. What are the characteristics of caste? Discuss.
5. Is caste system a unique Indian Phenomenon? Explain.

**Answers: Self-Assessment**

**Notes**

1. (i) about 200-100 B.C. (ii) Dasa varna (iii) 4000 B.C.  
(iv) Butchery (v) Individual

**6.10 Further Readings**



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 7: Jajmani System

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand the concept of Jajmani System.
- Explain the characteristics of Jajmani Systems.
- Discuss the Features of Jajmani System.
- Describe the functions and roles of Jajmani Systems.
- Assess the changes in Jajmani System.

### Introduction

Indian Society is structured on caste patterns and the economic and professional relationship between various castes in this set-up is called jajmani system. It is a pre-established division of labour among the castes sanctioned by religious and social traditions.

Jajmani is a peculiarity of Indian villages. In India, professions are generally hereditary and there is a long tradition of families carrying on self-same professions over generations. Normally, there is no deviation from the hereditary professions. Thus, the son of carpenter will become carpenter and the son of an ironsmith will become an ironsmith. Every Indian villager considers it natural and right to engage in professions peculiar to his caste and, on account of long tradition, feels at home in it and easily acquires proficiency.

The *jajmani* system as inter-familial inter-caste relationship pertaining to the patterning of superordinate-subordinate relations between patrons and suppliers of services. The patrons are the families of clean castes while the suppliers of services are the families of lower and unclean castes. It could be said that the *jajmani* system is a system of distribution whereby high caste landowning families are provided services and products by various lower castes such as carpenters (Khati), barbers (Nai), potters (Kumhars), blacksmiths (Lohars), washermen (Dhobis), sweepers etc. The servicing castes are called *kamins* while the castes served are called *jajmans*. For the services rendered, the servicing castes are paid in cash or in kind (grains, fodder, clothes, animal products like milk, butter, etc.).

**Jajmani system** or **Yajmani system** was a Indian social caste system and its interaction between upper castes and lower castes. It was an economic system where lower castes performed various functions for upper castes and received grain in return.

According to the Jajmani System there is exchange of goods and services between landowning higher castes and landless service castes. The service castes are traditionally weavers, leather workers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, barbers, washermen and so far constituting a group of artisans serving the community. The landed higher castes jajman or the patron and the service castes are jajman. The jajmani system is based on agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services. It is the link between the landowning high caste groups and occupational castes.

Oscar Lewis mentions that each caste groups within a village is traditionally bound to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. While the landowning high caste families receive services from lower castes and in return members of the low castes receive grains.

Jajmani System as a term was introduced into Indian social anthropology and sociology by William Wiser. In his contribution based on his study in a village in Uttar Pradesh he described how different castes interacted with one another in the production and exchange of goods and services. With variations this system existed throughout the country.



*Did u know?* The term *jajman* originally referred to the client for whom a Brahmin priest performed rituals, but later on it came to be referred to the patron or recipient of specialized services.

Beidelman (1959: 6-7) has pointed out that for the providers of goods and services, besides the term *kamin* other terms like *purjan*, *pardhan*, etc. are also used in different regions.

## 7.1 The Concept of Jajmani System

*Jajmani* system is a system of traditional occupational obligations. Castes in early India were economically interdependent on one another. The traditional specialized occupation of a villager followed the specialization assigned to his caste. The specialization of occupation led to the exchange of services in the village society. This relationship between the 'servicing' and the 'served' castes was not contractual, individual, impersonal, temporary, or limited but it was caste-oriented, long-termed and broadly supportive. This system in which the durable relation between a landowning family and the landless families that supply them with goods and services is called the *jajmani* system.

Yogendra Singh (1973: 186) describes *jajmani* system as a system governed by relationship based on reciprocity in inter-caste relations in villages. Ishwaran (1966: 41) referring to *jajmani* system (called *aya* in Mysore in South India) has said that it is a system in which each caste has a role to play in a community life as a whole. This role consists of economic, social and moral functions.

### Definition of Jajman and Kameen

According to Webster's Dictionary jajman is "a person by whom a Brahmin is hired to perform religious services, hence a patron, a client."

Etymologically, the word jajman is derived from the Sanskrit word Yajman which means a person who performs a Yajna and for the purpose of performance of yajna one has to hire the services of a Brahmin. Gradually, this word came to be applied to everyone who hired services or to whom some service was given. As N.S. Reddy observes, the farmer who engages carpenter or ironsmith for manufacture or repair of his tools is Jajman and the carpenter and the ironsmith are kameen or parjan. Between Jajman and Parjan the relationship is hereditary and is based on tradition. Jajmans get a variety of jobs done by parjans, as for example, the barber dresses the hair and shaves the beard: Kahar brings water from the well or river as the case may be, sweeper does sanitary jobs. For these services parjans are paid something. In a majority of cases farmers in Indian villages give grains for

Notes

the services of the parjans. In modern times currency notes are fast replacing all other media of exchange even in villages. In Jajmani system, Jajman enjoys so much respect that he is often referred to as Rajah (King) and parjans as subjects.

## 7.2 Characteristics of Jajmani Systems

1. Relationship under Jajmani was permanent
2. Jajmani was hereditary
3. Castes received grains against services rendered
4. Barter system

Various studies of Jajmani system in India have been made. Oscar Lewis studied Jajmani in North Indian villages. Jajmani in Eastern U.P was studied in 1955 by Opler and Singh and in 1955 N.S. Reddy studied this system in North India. Miller studied Jajmani system in Cochin in 1952, and in 1955, Sri Niwas and Bir Singh studied the same system in Mysore District. Sk. C. Dube's Indian villages are based on his classic study of Jajmani in Hyderabad. Jajmani in Tanjore was studied by him in 1955. In Gujarat Jajmani was studied by steel in 1953. An early study, in 1934, of Jajmani in Punjab was made by Darling. All these studies revealed and confirmed the universality of this system in Rural India but they also revealed that there were minor variations in the system from regions to regions.

In **Vetti-chakiri** and **Begar** lower castes have only had obligations or duties to render free services to the upper caste community also called as Vetti or Vetti chakiri.

### **The system**

Interactions between the *oonchi zat* (upper caste) and *neechi zat* (lower caste) are regulated by established patron-client relationships of the jajmani system, the upper castes being referred to as the 'Jajmans', and the lower caste as 'Kamin'.

Upon contact with a low-caste Muslim, a Muslim of a higher *zat* can "purify" by taking a short bath, since there are no elaborate rituals for purification. In Bihar state of India, cases have been reported in which the higher caste Muslims have opposed the burials of lower caste Muslims in the same graveyard.

Some data indicates that the castes among Muslims have never been as rigid as that among Hindus. The rate of endogamous marriage, for example, is less than two thirds. An old saying also goes "Last year I was a Julaha (weaver); this year a Shaikh; and next year if the harvest be good, I shall be a Sayyid." However, other scholars, such as disagreed with this thesis (see criticism below).

This coercive system has given rise to rebellion by lower castes against the zamindars in Telangana region called as in 1946.

## 7.3 Jajmani System in Rural Society

The notion of the jajmani system was popularized by colonial ethnography. It tended to conceptualize agrarian social structure in the framework of exchange relations. In its classical construct, different caste groups specialized in specific occupations and exchanged their services through an elaborate system of division of labor. Though asymmetry in position of various caste groups was recognized what it emphasized was not inequality in rights over land but the spirit of community. Wisner argued, each served the other. Each in turn was master. Each in turn was servant. This system of inter relatedness in service within Hindu community was called the Jajmani system. Central to such a construction of exchange is the idea of reciprocity (Gouldner) with the assumption that it was a non-exploitative system where mutual gratification was supposed to be the outcome of the reciprocal exchange.

## 7.4 Features of Jajmani System

The jajmani system is characterized by the following features:

Unbroken relationship- Under the jajmani system the kameen remains obliged to render the services throughout his life to a particular jajman and the jajman in turn has the responsibility of hiring services of a kameen.



Hereditary relationship- Jajmani rights are enjoyed hereditarily. After the death of a man his son is entitled to work as kameen for the same jajman family of families. The son of a jajman also accepts the son of the kameen as his kameen.

Multidimensional relationship- Due to the permanency of relationship both the jajman and kameen families become mutually dependent on each other. The relationship becomes very deep. They often take part in the personal and family affairs, family rituals and ceremonies.

Barter exchange-Under jajmani system the payments are made mainly in terms of goods and commodities. The kameen gets his necessities from the jajman in return of his services.

The jajmani system has gradually decayed in modern society. There are many reasons responsible for it. Modern economic system that measures everything in terms of its monetary value. The decline of belief in caste system and hereditary occupation has given a strong blow to the system. Growth of better employment opportunities outside the village and introduction of new transport options.

## 7.5 Jajmani Relations

Sometimes the relations between two or among more castes based on supplying a few things may only be contractual but not *jajmani*. For example, the weaver who is paid in cash for what he makes and sells is not entitled to customary share of the harvest. He is not a *kamin* and the purchaser is not his *jajman*. Further even in *jajmani* relations, there may be some products or services that may be contracted and paid for separately. For example, the rope-makers in village may supply the farmers, under *jajmani* arrangements, all necessary ropes except the rope used in wells which is specially long and thick and for which special payment has to be made.



Notes

The jajmani relations entail ritual matters and social support as well as economic exchanges. The servicing castes perform the ritual and ceremonial duties at the *jajman's* houses on occasions like birth, marriage and death.

D.N. Majumdar (1958) has given the example of a Thakur family (of Rajput caste) in a village in Lucknow district in Uttar Pradesh which is served by as many as families of ten castes for the lifecycle rites. For example, at the birth-feast of a child, Brahmin presides over the ceremony of 'Nam-Sanskaran' (giving a name), Sunar (goldsmith) provides the gold ornament for the new-born, Dhobi (washerman) washes dirty clothes, Nai (barber) carries messages, Khati (carpenter) provides a wooden stool (*patta*) on which the child is kept for the ceremony, Lohar (blacksmith) provides *kara* (iron bangle), Kumhar (potter) provides *kulhar* (jugs) for keeping cooked vegetables and drinking water, Pasi provides *patal* (leaf-plates) for taking food, and Bhanghi (scavenger) cleans the place after the feast. All people who help, receive gifts of food, money and clothes depending partly on custom, partly on *jajman's* affluence, and partly on the recipient's entreaty.

The *kamins* (lower castes) who provide specialized skills and services to their *jajmans* (higher castes) themselves need the goods and services of others. According to Harold Gould (1987: 169-70), these lower castes make their own *jajmani* arrangements either through direct exchange of labour or by paying in cash or kind. The middle castes also, like the lower castes, either subscribe to each other's services in return for compensations and payments or exchange services with one another.

The *kamins* not only provide goods to their *jajmans* but also perform those tasks for them which pollute them (*jajmans*); for example, washing of dirty clothes (by Dhobis), cutting of hair (by Nais), delivery of the new-born (by Nain), cleaning toilets (by Bhanghi), and so on. Though Dhobis, Nais, Lohars, etc. are themselves ranked as lower castes, yet they do not serve as *kamins* to Harijans, nor the Brahmins take these lower castes as their *jajmans*. However, when the lower caste families prosper, they discard their polluting occupations and try to get (and succeed also) ritual specialists to serve them.

## Notes

The *jajmani* links are between families rather than castes. Thus, a family of Rajputs gets its metal tools from a particular family of the Lohar (blacksmith) caste and not from all Lohar castes in the village. It is the particular former family of Lohars which will get a share of the Rajput family's crop at harvest and not other Lohar families. This *jajmani* relationship between the two families (of Lohar and Rajput) is durable because the Lohar family serves the same Rajput family that his father and grandfather served. The Rajput family also gets its tools and repairs from the descendants of the same Lohar family whose men made tools for their forefathers. If one of the associated families dies out, another of its lineage may take its place in the relationship. As an example, in the above case, if the Lohar's family has more sons than its clientele (Rajput family) can support, some seek other associates in places where there is shortage of Lohars (Blacksmiths).

Orenstein (1962: 310-14) has held that the families of village officials or village servants (for example, the watchmen) maintain *jajmani* relations with the whole village rather than with particular families. Thus, a watchman's family gets a contribution at harvest time from every landowner farmer's family in the village. The village servants may also have the tax-free use of villageland. Some service families maintain *jajmani* relations with a segment of the village rather than individual families. Such families have rights to serve all those who live in a particular section of the village.

Referring to the *jajmani* system, Kolenda (1963: 11-31) has said: "Hindu *jajmani* system may be approached as an institution or social system within Indian villages made up of a network of roles and of norms integrated into the roles and into the system as a whole and legitimized and supported by general cultural values." The important questions which need to be analyzed in the *jajmani* system are: What is the function of the system? What are the roles involved? What are its norms and values? How is the power and authority distributed in the system? How is this system related to other systems? What is the motivation in maintaining the system? What changes has the system undergone?

## 7.6 Functions and Roles of Jajmani System

Analyzing the function of the *jajmani* system, Leach (1960) has said that the *jajmani* system maintains and regulates the division of labour and economic interdependence of castes. According to Wisner (1967: 35), the *jajmani* system serves to maintain the Indian village as a self-sufficing community. Harold Gould (1987) has said that it (*jajmani* system) distributes agricultural produce in exchange for menial and craft services. Beidelman (1959) is of the opinion that it (*jajmani* system) maintains higher castes' prestige.

The roles involved in the *jajmani* system are those of *jajmans* and *kamins*. The *kamin* castes render certain occupational, economic and social services to the *jajman* castes for which the latter pay them at fixed intervals or on special occasions. However, all castes do not necessarily participate in this reciprocal exchange. For example, Teli is one caste which is normally not involved in the exchange of services system. *Kamins'* clientele may include members of his own village as well as other villages. *Kamin* may sell his rights to a client to another *kamin*. The important thing in the role-relationship of *jajman-kamin* is giving of various concessions, for example, free food, free clothes, free residence, rent-free land, casual aid, aid in litigation, etc. and protection of *kamins* by *jajmans* during various exigencies of life.

However, the *jajmani* system is not reciprocal in all villages. Kolenda (1963: 11-32) has maintained that dominant castes swing the balance of power in their favour in such relationships in many villages in India. Yogendra Singh (1973: 187) also believes that villages in India are changing today in respect of economic institutions, powers structure, and inter-caste relationships. A major source of economic change is land reform which has been introduced through abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms, ceiling of landholdings, redistribution of land, development of co-operative farming and religio-economic movement for gift of surplus land by the rich to the poor as *bhoodan*. These measures have affected interaction among castes, *jajmani* system, and the social system of the villages.

### Norms and Values

The traditional method of payment, almost in all regions in the country, is that it is made at harvest time when each landowning farmer family hands over some newly produced foodgrains to various

*kamins*. However, these harvest payments are only part of what the *kamin* family receives. The *kamin* may be dependent on the *jajman* for his house-site, for places where his animals may graze, for wood and cow-dung fuel, for loan of tools, and so forth. In addition, the *jajman* may give him clothes and gifts on ceremonial occasions and may also help him with loans of money in emergencies.

Wiser (1956) has referred to seventeen 'considerations' which *kamins* get from the *jajmans*. Harold Gould (1985: 140-141) also found all these considerations important in *jajmani* ties in his study of *jajmani* system in Sherupur village in Faizabad district (Uttar Pradesh) in 1954-55. Some of these considerations are: free residence site, free food for family, free clothing, free food for animals, free timber, free dung, rent-free land, credit facilities, opportunity for supplementary employment, free use of tools, implements and animals, free hides, aid in litigation, free funeral pyre lot and free use of raw materials. Harold Gould also studied the formal rate at which *jajmans* paid to *purjans* for the services rendered. For example, a Brahmin got 15 kilograms (28 pounds) of grain per family at the harvest time; Kori (weaver) got 15 kilograms of grain per harvest plus Rs. 20 per month per *jajman*; Kumhar (potter), Nai (barber) and Lohar (blacksmith) got 8 kilograms of grain per family per harvest, and Dhobi (washerwoman) got 4 kilograms of grain per woman in the household per harvest.

Giving the example of grain income of one *kamin* family from all the *jajmans* in the 'serving villages', Harold Gould says that in his village he found that a Nai (barber) got about 312 kilograms of grains in a year (in 1954-55) from fifteen joint families consisting of twenty-five nuclear units. Taking the *jajmani* relations with different castes, Gould found that all *jajmans* in the village (Sherupur) gave 2,039 kilograms of grains in one year to all the *purjan* families. The village consisted of forty-three families with a total population of 228 people. Of these, only nineteen families functioned as *jajmans* (who received services and disbursed grains). This suggests the magnitude of the economic interaction involved.

During a lean year, the farmer *jajman* does not give much foodgrain to his *kamins* but when he gets a good produce, he does not mind in giving some extra foodgrains to those *kamins* who have rendered good service to him. However, if the *kamin* dodges work for his *jajman*, say in repairing farmer's instruments or if the Dhobi (washerwoman) loses or tears many clothes, the *jajman* does not give him much. Similarly, the *kamin* renders services to *jajman* according to the payment he receives. According to M.N. Srinivas (1955: 11-13) also, those *jajmans* who pay in grains are favoured than those who pay only in cash.

In the allocation of power between the *jajmans* and *kamins*, according to Beidelman (1959), ritual purity and pollution are not significant. Low caste person, even if he is a *jajman* is considered subordinate to *kamin* of higher status caste. Power of high caste is based on land ownership and wealth, and *kamins* do not hold such power. Harold Gould (1987: 173) has asserted: "Basically the distinction is between the landowning cultivating castes, on the one hand, who dominate the social order and the landless craft and the menial castes, on the other, who are subordinate to them." Pocock (1963: 79) similarly declares: "If *jajmani* relations do not constitute a system, they constitute an organization. They are organized around one institution, the dominant caste of a given area."

There are norms concerning duties, rights, payments, and concessions for the *jajmans* and the *kamins*. *Jajman* has to be paternalistic towards his *kamins* and fulfil their demands. *Kamin* has also to behave like a son to his father. He has to support *jajman* in his factional disputes.

The cultural value in the *jajmani* system is that generosity and charity are religious obligations and inequality is God-given. The sacred, semi-sacred and the secular Hindu literature and oral tradition authorizes and justifies the *jajman-kamin* relationship. The caste council has the power of punishment for erring *jajmans* and *kamins*. At the same time, the sanctions permit that the *kamin* may not perform the required services and the *jajman* also may take away land rented or granted to *kamin*.

For example, if one Kumhar (potter) family attempts to take over the farmer associates (*jajmans*) of another, then the injured Kumhar family appeals to its caste council to call off the intruders. And if the Kumhars of the village believe that the *jajman* farmers are unfair to them, they may try to have all Kumhars of the village boycott the *jajman* farmers until they give up their unfair practices.

## 7.7 Jajmani System -An Exploitative System

Is *jajmani* system an exploitative system? Do *jajmans* exploit the *kamins* by paying them meagre amount of foodgrains or a small amount of cash or in some other manner? Beidleman (1959) explicitly equates the *jajman* with 'exploiter' and the *kamin* with 'exploited' and characterizes the system as 'feudal'. He believes the *jajmani* system to be one of the chief instruments of coercion, control and legitimation wielded by high caste landowning Hindus. Similarly, Lewis and Barnouw (1956) are of the opinion that the vast difference in power between the rich and the influential *jajmans* and the poor and the landless *kamins* leads to the exploitation of the *kamins* and coercing them into sustaining the power of those who have the higher rank and the upper hand. Some intellectuals' opinion is that there is no force or coercion involved in the *jajmani* system. First, the *kamins* are not totally dependent on their *jajmans* for their livelihood. They are free to sell their goods and provide services to other individuals and families who pay them cash. Second, when *kamins* feel that injustice has been done to them, they take the help of their caste panchayats which compel the *jajmans* to accept the demands of their *kamins*. Likewise, when the landowner *jajmans* feel convinced that one of their *kamins* (service groups) is derelict in its obligations or threatens the power and status of the land-owners, the *jajman* (patron) families can put collective pressure on them by withholding payment or by some other way. However, collective action on either side does not affect the interests of the caste as a whole. Caste solidarity prevails over loyalties to *jajmani* associates. Third, the *jajmans* treat their *kamins* in a paternalistic way and help them socially on occasions of emergencies. Fourth, the *jajmani* rules are so flexible that these can be interpreted in any way and shift in service arrangements can be made possible. However, minimum standards are maintained at any given time in each *jajmani* relation. Lastly, the members of high caste want to avoid the polluting as well as the specialized work. They have, therefore, to depend on the families who provide them the required services and goods. Considering the *jajmani* exchanges as mutually beneficial, they tolerate the occasional irrelevant demands of their *kamins* just as the *kamins* tolerate the occasional coercion of their *jajmans*. Therefore, to consider the *jajmani* system as exploitative system would be illogical. Rao (1961), Kblenda (1963: 21-29), Orenstein (1962), and Harold Gould (1985) have also maintained that condemning *jajmani* arrangements as brutally exploitative is too sweeping and obfuscating a generalization. Harold Gould (1987: 176-177) has said that an analysis of the *jajmani* system which sees it as a component of a feudal order seems unwarranted. The magnitude of the system is small by any measure of economic activity. The system persists not because of any 'rational' economic motivations but because of its importance to the maintenance of the social status and patterns of social interaction that are essential to the successful practice of rural Hinduism. The *jajman* is not primarily an economically and politically homogeneous class but a religio-economic category uniquely adopted to Indian civilization. The bond between *jajmans* and the servicing castes is enjoyment of a common religio- economic relationship and not enjoyment of a common relationship to the sources of wealth and power in society.

If may thus be asserted that in the *jajmani* system, the *jajman* status neither coincides with a landlord class, a dominant caste or the like nor does it depend upon membership in any particular social group but upon the possession of land, or access to the produce from land by whatever means. Mayer (1960), Mathur (1958) and Pocock (1963) have also maintained that access to farm land has always been 'caste free' in India which means that the modest means needed to maintain at least some semblance of *jajman* status has technically always been available to members of any caste in the hierarchy. Following Harold Gould (1987: 177) that *jajman* status refers to a religio-economic category rather than a social stratum, it may be concluded that *jajmans* cannot be perceived as exploiters (as a social class). At the most it may be said that amount given by the *jajmans* to *kamins* is low in present age which compels them to seek cash income from other sources. On the other hand, the *jajman's* status was never confined (even in the old social order) merely to a landed aristocracy. People from different castes had the opportunities to become *jajmans*. But being a *jajman* and being part of the currently dominant political order were not automatically coterminous. Membership in the political hierarchy was merely one means of achieving a material and power position enabling one to be a *jajman* if one so desired. It was never the exclusive means.

Being a *jajman* meant being an orthodox Hindu whose value system made necessary the engagement of certain specialists (of serving castes). Being a landlord meant being a member of the ruling class (Harold Gould, 1987: 185). And a *jajman* was not an 'exploiter' of a *kamin*, though a landlord could be an exploiter. The desire to become a *jajman* is not a desire to get 'feudal status' or a 'common inclination to exploit the weak' but the wish to practice certain rituals and a way of life necessitating the avoidance of impurity.

## 7.8 Changes in Jajmani System

*Jajmani* system is related to other systems like caste system, religious system, system of landownership, kinship system, and the political structure of the village. As such, the change in these systems has affected the functioning of the *jajmani* system too in the present days. The important changes in society that have affected the *jajmani* system in the last five or six decades are: reduction in the powers of the village elders' councils, effect of the factory system and industrialization on the quality of services rendered by the *kamins*, changes in the rigidity of the caste system, spread of education, migration of people of intermediate and lower castes to cities in search of jobs and material amenities, abolition of the *jagirdari* system, introduction of land reforms, better employment in urban areas, feasibility of market transactions due to the availability of modern transport, and so forth. Because of all these factors, the *jajmani* system has been largely supplanted in many villages while in some it has completely disappeared. Artisans prefer to get money for their goods. Cultivators who have money prefer to buy things of quality from the market place by paying in cash.



**Did u know?** The dominant caste prefers to summon political help rather than depend on their *kamins* for support.

No wonder that the *jajmani* system has been very much weakened today. Iravati Karve and Y.B. Damle (1963: 151-52) might have found two-thirds of their respondents (222 out of 326) in a survey conducted in 1962 in five villages in Maharashtra) and Bose and Jodha (1965: 118-123) might have found 86.0 per cent (111 out of 129) of their respondents in their survey (conducted in 1963 in Barmer district in western Rajasthan) in favour of the *jajmani* system because of the economic benefits, the availability of the ritual services, getting of dependable support by the landowners from some of the families and castes in their factional struggles, and getting patron's protection in exigencies, yet the fact is that the traditional *jajmani* relations have very much weakened in recent years. Not much of the village economy is now carried on through *jajmani* arrangements. Biedleman too is of the opinion that it is doubtful if the *jajmani* system will survive in the coming years.

### Self-Assessment

#### 1. Tick the right answer to the following question:

- (i) Which of the following caused de-industrialisation of the rural economy during the colonial period?
- (a) Preference of craftsmen for urban life      (b) Import of goods from England  
(c) Preference of craftsmen for agriculture
- (ii) Match the following sets
- (a) Ryotwari System      (a) Land revenue settlement with landlords  
(b) Zaminidari System      (b) Land revenue settlement with family heads and landlords collectively  
(c) Mahalwari System      (c) Land revenue settlement with landlords who are the cultivators



Notes

(iii) Tick the right answer to the following question.

Which of the following characterised the traditional jajmani system?

- (a) Reciprocity and dominance (b) Only reciprocity  
(c) Exchange of gifts

(iv) Tick mark the correct answer

Which of the following governmental programme is meant for the generation of gainful employment for the rural poor.

- (a) Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (b) Sampoorn Grameen Rozgar Yojana  
(c) Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (d) All of the above.

## 7.9 Summary

- The term *jajman* originally referred to the client for whom a Brahmin priest performed rituals, but later on it came to be referred to the patron or recipient of specialized services.
- *Jajmani* system is a system of traditional occupational obligations. Castes in early India were economically interdependent on one another. The traditional specialized occupation of a villager followed the specialization assigned to his caste.
- This system in which the durable relation between a landowning family and the landless families that supply them with goods and services is called the *jajmani* system.
- The jajmani relations entail ritual matters and social support as well as economic exchanges. The servicing castes perform the ritual and ceremonial duties at the *jajman's* houses on occasions like birth, marriage and death.
- The *kamins* (lower castes) who provide specialized skills and services to their *jajmans* (higher castes) themselves need the goods and services of others.
- Referring to the *jajmani* system, Kolenda (1963: 11-31) has said: "Hindu *jajmani* system may be approached as an institution or social system within Indian villages made up of a network of roles and of norms integrated into the roles and into the system as a whole and legitimized and supported by general cultural values."
- The roles involved in the *jajmani* system are those of *jajmans* and *kamins*. The *kamin* castes render certain occupational, economic and social services to the *jajman* castes for which the latter pay them at fixed intervals or on special occasions.
- *Kamin* may sell his rights to a client to another *kamin*. The important thing in the role-relationship of *jajman-kamin* is giving of various concessions, for example, free food, free clothes, free residence, rent-free land, casual aid, aid in litigation, etc. and protection of *kamins* by *jajmans* during various exigencies of life.
- The traditional method of payment, almost in all regions in the country, is that it is made at harvest time when each landowning farmer family hands over some newly produced foodgrains to various *kamins*.
- During a lean year, the farmer *jajman* does not give much foodgrain to his *kamins* but when he gets a good produce, he does not mind in giving some extra foodgrains to those *kamins* who have rendered good service to him.
- In the allocation of power between the *jajmans* and *kamins*, according to Beidelman (1959), ritual purity and pollution are not significant. Low caste person, even if he is a *jajman* is considered sub-ordinate to *kamin* of higher status caste.
- The cultural value in the *jajmani* system is that generosity and charity are religious obligations and inequality is God-given. The sacred, semi-sacred and the secular Hindu literature and oral tradition authorizes and justifies the *jajman-kamin* relationship.
- The *jajman* is not primarily an economically and politically homogeneous class but a religio-economic category uniquely adopted to Indian civilization.

- The important changes in society that have affected the *jajmani* system in the last five or six decades are: reduction in the powers of the village elders' councils, effect of the factory system and industrialization on the quality of services rendered by the *kamins*, changes in the rigidity of the caste system, spread of education, migration of people of intermediate and lower castes to cities in search of jobs and material amenities, abolition of the *jagirdari* system,.

### 7.10 Key-Words

- Kamins : Lower castes.
- Jajmans : Higher castes.

### 7.11 Review Questions

- What do you mean by Jajmani system? Explain.
- Discuss the characteristics and features of Jajmani system.
- Explain the role and functions of Jajmani system.
- Write briefly on the changes of Jajmani system.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

- (i) (b)                      (ii)  $a - c; b - a; c - b$                       (iii) (a)                      (iv) (d)

### 7.12 Further Readings



Books

- Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
- Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
- Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 8: Changing Trends and Future of Caste System

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand changing structure of caste.
- Assess the new trends formed in caste system.
- Explain the factors and functions of the caste system.
- Discuss demerits and merits of caste system.

### Introduction

The **caste system** is a system of division of labour and power in human society. It is a system of social stratification, and a basis for affirmative action. Historically, it defined communities into thousands of endogamous hereditary groups called Jatis.

The Jatis were grouped by the Brahminical texts under the four well-known caste categories (the varnas): viz Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Certain people were excluded altogether, ostracized by all other castes and treated as untouchables.

Although identified with Hinduism, caste systems have also been observed among other religions on the Indian subcontinent, including some groups of Muslims, Buddhists and Christians. The latter are similar to the caste system reported in the Igbo-Osu Christian community in Africa.

Caste is commonly thought of as an ancient fact of Hindu life, but various contemporary scholars have argued that the caste system was constructed by the British colonial regime. Caste is neither unique to Hindu religion nor to India; caste systems have been observed in other parts of the world, for example, in the Muslim community of Yemen, Christian colonies of Spain, and Japan.

The Indian government officially recognizes historically discriminated lowest castes of India such as Untouchables and Shudras under Scheduled Castes, and certain economically backward castes as Other Backward Castes. The Scheduled Castes are sometimes referred to as Dalit in contemporary literature. In 2001, the proportion of Dalit population was 16.2 percent of India's total population.

Since 1950, India has enacted and implemented many laws and social initiatives to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of its Dalit population. By 1995, of all jobs in the Central Government service, 17.2 percent of the jobs were held by Dalits. Of the highest paying, senior most jobs in

government agencies and government controlled enterprises, over 10 percent were held by members of the Dalit community, a tenfold increase in 40 years but yet to fill up the 15 percent reserved quota for them. In 1997, India democratically elected K.R. Narayanan, a Dalit, as the nation's President. In the last 15 years, Indians born in historically discriminated minority castes have been elected to its highest judicial and political offices. While the quality of life of Dalit population in India, in terms of metrics such as poverty, literacy rate, access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water, housing, etc. have seen faster growth amongst the Dalit population between 1986 and 2006, for some metrics, it remains lower than overall non-Dalit population, and for some it is better than poor non-Dalit population. A 2003 report claims inter-caste marriage is on the rise in urban India. Indian societal relationships are changing because of female literacy and education, women at work, urbanization, need for two-income families, and influences from the media.

India's overall economic growth has produced the fastest and most significant socio-economic changes to the historical injustice to its minorities. Legal and social program initiatives are no longer India's primary constraint in further advancement of India's historically discriminated sections of society and the poor. Further advancements are likely to come from improvements in the supply of quality schools in rural and urban India, along with India's economic growth.

## 8.1 Changing Structure of Caste

The caste system, as it exists today, has grown and developed through many centuries. For discussing the caste system, we may divide the Indian history into four periods: (1) ancient period, which includes (a) Vedic period, (b) Brahmanical period, (c) Maurya period, (d) post-Maurya period (that is, Sanga, Kushan and Gupta periods), and (e) Harsh Vardhna and other periods; (2) medieval period, which includes (a) Rajput period, and (b) Muslim period; (3) British period, which includes (a) pre-industrial period, and (b) pre-independence industrial period; and (4) post-independence period.

### 8.1.1 Vedic or Pre-Buddhist Period (4000–1000 B.C.)

The work on the history and philosophy of caste in the Vedic period is an outcome of an inquiry into the Vedic literature which mainly includes the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads*. Indian history, in a strictly historical sense, begins from the Rig Veda. The Vedic period is supposed to have started from 400 B.C. and continued up to 1000 B.C. (according to P.V. Kane). But, for the purpose of analyzing caste, we consider the Vedic period as lying between 1500 B.C. (approximate date of writing the Rig Veda) to 322 B.C., when Chandragupta came to power and Maurya dynasty started in which the fundamental tenets of the Upanishadic thought were formulated and preached.

There are two schools of thought regarding the caste system in the Vedic period. One school holds that the broad frame of the caste system had existed even in the earliest portion of the Rig Veda and the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas were the three caste divisions that the society of the Rig Veda clearly recognized. (Sudra 'caste', however, according to this view did not exist. It was created by the Aryans in the closing phase of the Rig Veda). The other school maintains that these three were not castes but *varnas* which were not hereditary but flexible. Some exponents of this later view are Muir Zimmer (*Philosophies of India*), Weber (*The History of Indian Literature*, 1882) and Ghurye (*Caste and Race in India*: 1932, 143). On the other hand, those who rejected this view and supported the first one were Haug (*The Origin of Brahminism*: 1863), Kern (quoted in *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, 250), Dutt (*Origin and Growth of Caste in India*) and Apte (*Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Poona, November 1940). They held that the caste system did exist in the time of the Rig Veda, though it was not found in a developed state and these barriers were surmountable. B.R. Kamble (*Caste and Philosophy in Pre-Buddhist-India*, 1979: 16) has recently held that the caste system was sufficiently developed in the Rig Veda time and this system was not flexible but had raised enough barriers.

### 8.1.2 Brahmanical Period (1000–600 B.C.)

The end of the Rigvedic period marks the beginning of the later Vedic age, popularly known as the Brahmanical age. The literature that represents this age includes the *Brahmanas* and older *Upanishads*. This period approximately covers the span of about four hundred years beginning from 1000 B.C. In this period, the hierarchical system of four *varnas* firmly established itself and remained enduring for

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all times to come. The period also represents a spectacular growth of Brahminism and the Brahmin privileges which the Brahmins won through the instrumentality of the religion. The rise of big states increased the power of the Kshatriyas over the Vaisyas and the Sudras, though their secondary position in relation to the Brahmins remained a cause of their discontentment. Brahmins and Kshatriyas came into conflict with each other sometimes in the middle of the fourth century B.C., each asserting its superiority over the other. The amalgamation of tribes, the acquisition of new territories and the subsequent swelling of the kingdoms in size, and the successful leadership of the kings in wars inevitably led to a growth in the Kshatriya power. This growth of royal (Kshatriya) power and prerogatives on the one hand and the impossible demands of the Brahmins on the other was the chief cause of this struggle. This being the case, the problem of social relations within the various social groups along with their position, privileges and disabilities assumed prime importance. Caste distinctions became clearer in the literature of the *Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*. Besides, the fourth caste of Sudras figured very often as an integral part of the Aryan society, occupying the lowest position in it. The theory of four castes came to be repeatedly mentioned in the literature of this period, and the four *castes* became clearly established and rigid.

In the Epic period (600-323 B.C.), therefore, we find that the class differentiation grew. Taking advantage of the wars among the Kshatriya rulers themselves, the Brahmins succeeded in organizing themselves as an exclusive class. In the latter part of the Epic period, priesthood became hereditary and inevitably the Brahmins began to pay attention to the purity of the blood and attaining a position of superiority over others. They took conscious efforts to organize the social life of the people by writing the *Grihsutras* (700-300 B.C.) and *Dharmasutras* (600-300 B.C.), etc. The former prescribed in the minutest details the duties of man from his birth to burial and the latter dealt with a code of social behaviour and relationships. It may, therefore, be said that the starting point of the caste system was the later Vedic age (800-500 B.C.) and the Epic age (500-200 B.C.). Since the basis of social stratification was division of labour, therefore, in its original form it was the class system rather than the caste system. The racial factor, the occupational bias, the philosophy of action, and the religious concept of purity and pollution—all contributed to the formation of the caste system.

### 8.1.3 Maurya Period (322-184 B.C.)

After the fall of Nanda dynasty in 322 B.C. started the Maurya period. The two important rulers of this age were Chandragupta Maurya (322-298 B.C.) and Ashoka (273-233 B.C.). It was in this age that whole of India was politically united for the first time under one head and rule. Political unity led to the cultural unity of the country. We get some idea about the social organization and the functioning of the caste system in this period from Kautilya's writings. Kautilya, a Brahmin minister of Chandragupta Maurya, a Sudra ruler, tried to remove various restrictions imposed by the Brahmins on the Sudras by declaring that the royal law would supersede the *dharma* law. The rights and the privileges of Brahmins received a further blow in the days of Ashoka, grandson of Chandragupta Maurya. Ashoka's religious policy was broadly based on toleration and universal brotherhood which did not recognize the caste barriers or geographical boundaries. In his period, Vedic ritualism was completely ruled out and animal sacrifice prohibited. The caste system, because of all these measures, could not develop as a rigid institution in this period.

### 8.1.4 Post-Maurya Period (184 B.C.-606 A.D.)

The last Maurya ruler was killed by his Brahmin commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga who later on became the ruler himself in 184 B.C. and established a new dynasty called Sunga dynasty which ruled for 112 years (184-72 B.C.). Pushyamitra was an ardent patron of Brahmanism and therefore, his reign marked a powerful and militant Brahmanic reaction. It was under the patronage of Sunga, Kanva (73-28 B.C.) and Kushan kings (25 A.D-327 A.D.) that a fresh stimulus was provided to the revival of the Brahmanical religion and the development of the caste system. The probable date of *Manu Smriti* is believed to be 185 B.C. It was through the writings in this and other *Smritis* that Vedic rites were revived and Brahmins, giving themselves special privileges and imposing severe restrictions on the Sudras, once again established their supremacy. *Manu Smriti* mentioned that the Sudra who insults a twice-born man shall have his tongue cut out; if he mentions the names and *jatis* of the twice-born with contempt, an iron-nail, ten fingers long, shall be thrust in his mouth; if he arrogantly



teaches Brahmins their duty, the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears. If a king be in a dying condition on account of lack of money, yet he shall not take tax from a Brahmin who is well-versed in the *Vedas*. Thus, equality in law was completely destroyed by such prescriptions and the caste system developed on rigid lines and assumed a new structure.

While the foundation stone for the revival of Brahminism was laid in the Sunga, Kanva and Kushan dynasties, its real development came in the Gupta period (300A.D.-500 A.D.), the period called the Golden Age of Hinduism or the period of Hindu Renaissance. Brahminism became the ethnic religion of India in this period and the caste system got a fresh incentive. However, the caste system had not assumed that rigidity in this period which we associate with it in the Muslim or in the beginning of the British period in respect of inter-marriage, inter-dining, and professions. Marriage rules were some what elastic and inter-marriages between people of different castes were not unknown. The prehistoric view that the Sudras should be content merely to become the servants of the twice-born was neither accepted in theory nor followed in practice. Sudras in this period were permitted to become traders, artisans and agriculturists. However, untouchability existed in this period more or less in its present form. The untouchables lived outside the main-settlements and used to strike a piece of wood as they entered them so that men might note their arrival and avoid their contact.

### 8.1.5 Harsh Vardhna and Other Periods (606–700 A.D.)

After the collapse of the Gupta empire, northern India again became a congeries of small states and many petty kingdoms arose in the course of next fifty years. But under Harsha Vardhana (606-647 A.D.), these disintegrating units were brought under the central authority and the political unity of India was restored. The caste system, therefore, continued to have that structure in this period as it had in the Gupta period. The elaborate account of social, religious and economic conditions of India of this period is available in Chinese scholar Hieun Tsang's writings who visited India in 630 A.D. and remained here till 643 A.D. He writes that Brahminism dominated in the country, caste ruled the social structure, and persons following unclean occupations like butchers, fishermen and scavengers had to live outside the four walls of the city.

### 8.1.6 Rajput Period (700–1200 A.D.)

The medieval period (700–1757 A.D.) includes the Rajput period (700–1200A.D.) and the Muslim period (1200-1757A.D.). The ancient Hindu period came to an end with the death of Harsha in the middle of the seventh century and the medieval period of history began. After the death of Harsha, the whole of India once again disintegrated into a large number of small independent kingdoms set up throughout the country, each under a Rajput ruler. This period (from the middle of the seventh century to the end of the twelfth century) is, thus, marked by the rise and growth of the Rajput power over northern India.

The cultural life of the Hindus in the beginning of the Rajput period, that is, before the advent of Islam, was not very different from the one found in the end of the ancient period, that is, during Harsha's period. One of the most remarkable facts which influenced the social system of this period is the absence of any external danger and isolation of the country from the rest of the world, particularly with the neighbouring countries like China, Java, Sumatra, etc. No known country was isolated from the rest of the world for so long a time as India was for five hundred years. This had far-reaching effects. The Indian social system did not change. Society became static and the caste system became rigid. Brahmins gave themselves more privileges and permitted flesh, wine and women in worship. The *mathas* established by Shankaracharya became the centres of the luxurious life. The system of *devdasi* fostered the growth of temple prostitution which had the effect of loosening moral codes. The Rajputs were loyal to their clans and to die in the battlefield for clan's honour was esteemed as a personal triumph. A Rajput's exclusive loyalty to clan, which was confined to the person and territory of his chief, made him blind or indifferent to the larger patriotism of the whole of India. Consequently, when foreign armies attacked India, they were more often than not met singly, each individual clan in its turn, with disastrous results for the country. A large number of new castes and sub-castes sprang up. The Brahmins tightened their bonds of caste and defended themselves by the increased rigidity of caste associations. Probably the process of disintegration began with the Brahmin caste. Besides the Rigvedi and the Yajurvedi Brahmins of old, their sub-castes multiplied and they came to

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be known by their territorial limits as Kanauji Brahmins, Konkan Brahmins, Telugu Brahmins, and so on. Similarly, sub-divisions among the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas soon followed. In due course, a large number of occupational castes, such as weavers, smiths, carpenters, brewers, fishermen, cowherds, etc. which originally started only as occupational-guilds, came to be regarded as distinct castes or sub-castes. Since the vision of each caste and sub-caste was circumscribed by its own interest, it had evil repercussions on the social and political life of the country. Thus, before the advent of Muslims, a distinct change had come about in our social structure in the form of multiplicity of castes and rigid observance of the caste rules.

**8.1.7 Muslim Period (1200–1757 A.D.)**

The advent of Islam and the iconoclastic tendencies (that is, movement against the use of images and idols in religious worship) of the early Muslim rulers made India no longer the peaceful home for the safe pursuit of Brahminism. Though several attempts were made in the seventh century by the Muslims to enter India but it was in 711-713 A.D. that Sindh and Multan were conquered by a Muslim—Muhammad-Bin-Kasim. However, the Arab Muslims could not retain their political power in that region for long. Next followed the Muslim conquest of Punjab by Mahmud Ghazni in the tenth century (995–1030 A.D.). But the foundation of the Muslim Empire in India was laid down by Mahmud Ghorī in 1175. Within thirty years, he conquered many parts of India and thus started the Muslim period. The caste system in the Muslim period during different dynasties (that is, Slave dynasty (1206-1290), Khilji dynasty (1290-1320), Tughlak dynasty (1320-1412), Sayyid dynasty (1414-1451), Lodhi dynasty (1451-1525), and Mughal dynasty (1526-1757) including Babar (1526-1530), Humayun (1530-1540 and 1554-1555), Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shahjahan (1627-1658), Aurangzeb (1658-1707) and his descendants and Bahadurshah (1707-1857) rules) became still more rigid because Muslims were not absorbed in the elastic Hindu-fold. Their religion—Islam—being fiercely monotheistic religion (that is, doctrine that there is only one God) could not allow any compromise with polytheism. The Hindus and Muslims, therefore, could not mix together. Since Muslims led a religious crusade upon India and tried to convert people to Islam, Brahmins assuming upon themselves the responsibility of protecting the Hindus from being proselytized, imposed severe restrictions on Hindus making caste system a very rigid system. Though some *bhaktas* (saints) like Ramanuj, Kabir, Nanak, Chaitanya, Tukaram, Tulsidas, Namdev, etc. preached Bhakti cult in this period which denounced idolatory and caste and preached the equality of all people, protested against excessive ritualism and domination of the priestly class, yet this cult could not dis-integrate the caste system. One reason why Brahmins succeeded in imposing their leadership on Hindus in religious and social fields was because of their control over temples which came to be used in this (Muslim) period not only for worship but for political activities, cultural programmes, educational activities, and so on. Brahmins made caste distinctions more rigorous by declaring that Muslims and all those Hindus who worked with or for Muslims would be treated as *malechh*. Thus, castes like *sunar* (goldsmiths), *luhar* (blacksmiths), *nai* (barbers), *dhobi* (washermen) and *khati* (carpenters), etc., came to be treated as castes of low status. *Puranas* were rewritten and new commandments were prescribed, making the caste system very rigid.

**8.1.8 Pre-industrial British Period (1757–1918 A.D.)**

The East India Company secured some commercial privileges from the Mughals in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Soon it conquered India from the Muslim rulers and the Marathas and thus started the British period from 1774 when Warren Hastings was appointed the first Governor General of India. The material development of the country under the British, the restoration of our contact with the outer world, the administrative and socio-economic policies of the government and some of the legislative measures taken brought change in our religious doctrines and practices and also in the caste structure of the society. The British transferred the judicial powers of the caste councils to the civil and the criminal courts which affected the authority which panchayats held over their members. Besides, the Caste Disabilities Removal Act of 1850, the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, and the Special Marriage Act of 1872 also attacked the caste system. By removing some of the disabilities of untouchables through some social measures, the British Government gave a further blow to the integrity of the caste system. However, all these measures were taken by the British Government

purely for administrative reasons and not because it wanted to abolish the caste system. Ghurye (1961: 190) also writes that most of the activities of the British Government were dictated by prudence of administration and not by a desire to reduce the rigidity of caste.

Some of the social movements of social reformers also attacked the caste system in this (British) period. The Brahmo Samaj movement founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in 1820 and raised by K.C. Sen and D.N. Tagore rejected the barriers of caste divisions, worship of idol, and sacrificial ritual and stood forth for universalism and the brotherhood of man. The Prarthana Sabha movement started in 1849 in Maharashtra as Paramhansa Sabha and later on changed into theistic organization called Prarthana Samaj and chiefly supported by Justice Ranade also devoted its attention to social reform such as inter-dining, inter-caste marriage, and remarriage of widows, etc. Later on, it was from this Prarthana Samaj that the Society of the Servants of India, which took a leading part in promoting social reforms, sprung up.

Far different in character were two other reform movements which took their inspiration from India's past and derived their basic principles from her ancient scriptures. These two movements – Arya Samaj and Ramakrishna Mission – led to the revival of aggressive Hinduism.



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The Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj were largely the early outcome of the renaissance products of ideas associated with the west and represent the Indian response to western rationalism.

The Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-1883) was the first to preach militant Hinduism. It rejected *Smritis* and *Puranas*, decried polytheism and accepted the philosophy of “one Veda, one religion and one God”. The Samaj raised voice against caste and its prohibition of sea-voyage and started the *suddhi* movement or re-Hinduizing the fallen – the outcastes, the converts and other externals. As a proselytizing sect, with great urge for social service, the Arya Samaj is still an important factor in the Hindu resurgence in northern India.

The Ramakrishna Mission represents the synthesis of the ancient or oriental and the modern or western. Started ten years after the death of Ramakrishna Paramhansa by his disciple Swami Vivekananda (1861-1902), it preached that the caste system is for those who are away from God and it should therefore be abolished. It holds up pure Vedantic doctrine as its ideal and aims at the development of the highest spirituality that a man is capable of. Vivekanand's bold proclamation that caste has nothing to do with Hinduism or religion or birth and that Hindu culture and civilization is the most superior one had in fact astonished the world and infused a refreshing consciousness of inherent strength among Hindus whose attitude then was marked with a tone of apology and inferiority towards European culture and civilization.

All these attacks, however, did not succeed in removing the rigidity of the caste system in this period, though some structural features of caste were definitely affected.



Did u know?

The Lingayat movement started by a Brahmin Vasava in South India also preached against the superiority of the Brahmins, abolition of idol-worship and giving up of the caste system.

## 8.2 New Trends Found in the Caste System of Modern India

New trends in Caste System: the disorganisation of the Caste System has led some to infer that in the future the Caste System will cease to exist. But some scholars have refuted this doubt. According to

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G.S.Ghurye there is no fear of the injunction of the Caste System in the near future due to the following towing conditions.

**1. Elections based on casteism**

On the establishment of a democracy in India the government machinery is operated by representatives elected by the people. The method of election has done much to encourage the Caste System because of casteism among the voters. In this way people are asked to vote for their caste candidate and this casteism is maintained by the elected leaders after the elections are over. Some political parties sponsor only that candidate for elections in a particular area whose caste is the most numerous among the voters.

**2. Special constitutional provision for backward classes**

The constitution provides for the protection of the backward and Scheduled Castes. Some posts have been reserved for them in Government services. They are given all types of facilities and special scholarships for education. All this is most welcome and even necessary and yet more special rights have encouraged casteism in the backward classes since the caste is proving beneficial to them because of these prerogatives.

In India, on the one hand, the caste is becoming weaker due to the influence of such factors as industrialisation, urbanisation, increase in the means of transportation, populating of English education, political and social awakening, democratic Government and laws abolishing untouchability etc and on the other such new organisations as labour union, etc, on the basis of occupation, post, capacity etc., are being established.

Due to an increase in the desire for money caused by the influences of western education the sense of superiority or inferiority is now based on wealth and social power of rather than on caste. The class consciousness, based on occupations, etc, is replacing the caste consciousness.

All the changes led people to believe that the Caste System will generally take on the form of a class system. But while, on the one hand, class consciousness seems to be progressing, on the other one can see progress in casteism as well. For people who are specially gifted in a particular occupation, other occupations are very limited in India and the paths to those that are available are difficult.

Children of those parents who have a small income or who have no wealth look out only for service. In some big business institution and sometimes even in educational institutions what happens is that the proprietors, organisations and senior officials. Casteism of a similar type prevails also in Government services and political elections. Hence it can not be asserted that the caste is disappearing and classism is increasing. Actually, in India casteism is being transformed into classism.

### **8.3 Factors Moulding the Caste System**

On the basis of above analysis, it cannot be assumed that the entire caste system took definite shape at one particular time and was not later modified. Rather, we can trace diverse factors working together with various potency at different times and places. Lawrence Ross (1968: 407-08) has identified six such factors as follows:

**1. Pre-Aryan Food and Occupational Taboos**

The original pre-Dravidian inhabitants of India, that is, proto-australoids and austro-asiatics, had prescribed many taboos for the people on sharing food, etc. with the aliens, specially with the Dravidian-speaking strangers, long before the Aryans came to India and settled in North India. The idea was that food and crafts touched by the strangers would offset the logical *mana* or magic and thus would have dangerous magical effect on the people who eat/use it. The best representatives of these pre-Dravidians are the present Nagas of Assam who still taboo alien food with the strangers.

**2. Tribal Cohesion**

The aboriginal tribes, as they became accessible, gradually entered the religious and social systems of the Hindus with whom they came into contact. However, they retained their original unity

based on their socio- religious mores and folkways. The Hindus also tolerated their customs and permitted them to retain their practices with the spirit of compromise. The tribe thus became an endogamous caste. This slow process of assimilation was seen in various stages of development in different parts of India.

### 3. The Aryan Desire for Racial Purity

When the Aryans entered India during the second century B.C., they were divided into three classes: the ruling or military class, the priestly class, and the commoners. Initially, it was possible for the people to pass from one class to another. The Aryans, wishing to preserve their racial purity, seem to have prohibited inter-marriage with the aborigines. To this day, the higher castes generally have fair skins and narrower noses than the castes lower on the scale.

### 4. Guild Perpetuation

The gradual development of industry brought division of labour. The Aryans, with better paying occupations, protected the interests of their children by assigning them the traditional family occupation, combined with guild endogamy. They forced on some of the native inhabitants heavy manual labour, scavenging, and working with carcasses of dead cattle. Those who were compelled with such defiled occupations were prohibited from marrying those whose work was honoured. The desire to perpetuate the guild and its rights was a factor that strengthened caste.

### 5. Priestly Supremacy and Religious Dogmas

When the Aryans came into India, initially priesthood admitted recruits from other classes. The priest class was, however, subordinate to the military class. Gradually, the Brahmins gained supremacy by monopolizing the priestly work. When Buddhism was accepted as state religion in 550 B.C., it opposed the caste system by emphasizing virtue rather than birth as means of salvation. The Brahmins regarded their ascendancy after wars with the Kshatriyas and promulgated many dogmas to perpetuate their supremacy. These dogmas were piously believed and gave strong religious backing to the maintenance of caste barriers throughout the ages. The initiation of religious ideas has been infectious. The vested interests of the Brahmins have for centuries been supported by the civil powers. Many a sub-castes came into origin with some new rituals and claimed full status as an endogamous caste. And thus, the number of castes went on increasing. The rigidity in the caste system too increased.

### 6. Migration

As groups moved to new places, they were soon isolated from their parental castes, since means of transport and communication had not developed. Travel by foot or by cart was the only means of keeping in touch with the kin. Gradually, their food, customs and rituals changed through the years. These variations gave rise to new caste groups.

## Pre-independence Industrial Period (1919-1947 A.D.)

The British did little to modify India's religious and social customs. They adopted 'hands off policy' to produce planned social change. They promised complete religious neutrality and freedom of worship to the people. The collectors of land taxes were elevated into *zamindars* and *maharajas*. Men at the top of the caste hierarchy were confirmed in their prerogatives and powers over the destinies of their fellows. Under such conditions, many of the customs connected with caste continued to flourish. Some exceptions were that the civil statutes (for example, Removal of Caste Disabilities Act) and courts sometimes regulated marriage and that the criminal courts, in stead of the caste councils, decided cases of assault, adultery and rape. In spite of the legalization of inter-caste marriages by the Special Marriage Act of 1872, these never became numerically important.

After the World War, India came to be industrialized more and more which led to the migration of the people from villages to cities, that is, to the process of urbanization. Besides these two factors of industrialization and urbanization, some other factors also changed the caste structure in this period. Before we discuss the structure of the caste system in the present period and analyze how its rigours have slackened, we will first discuss the role of two factors of industrialization and urbanization responsible for change in the caste structure in the first half of the twentieth century.



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**Industrialization**

The growth of industries destroyed the old crafts and provided unheard of ways to earn a livelihood. Occupational mobility and movement from the compact ancestral village started breaking down those caste norms which did not concern marriage. Industrialization also created new transportation facilities, specially crowded trains and buses, which threw together millions of people of all castes and left little room for the niceties of ceremonial purity. Taboos against some foods and against accepting food and water from persons of other castes also gradually started weakening when industrial workers belonging to various castes started living together in the same house, leaving their families behind in the villages.

However, the impact of industrialization has not been uniform and absolute on all the salient features of the caste system. For example, it has no effect on marriage customs or belief in caste norms. Perhaps, this is because of the deep-rooted social values. But there is no doubt that industrialization does have its impact on the structure of caste.

It was believed by some scholars that industrialization would lead to the automatic dissolution of the caste system and its progressive replacement by a class system analogous to that found in the advanced industrial societies of the west. To a large extent this expectation or visualization arose from the belief that the application of mechanical forces and nationality to the production of goods and services inspires social change. But this thesis about social change presents only the economic perspective. There are the socio-structural and demographic concomitants too of social change. Industrial society need not be a fully 'rational' society.

**Urbanization**

The growth of cities and the developed means of transport and communication considerably changed the functioning of caste in India. Not only the commensal inhibitions have been relaxed but the authority of Brahmins has also come to be questioned. Referring to this, M.N Srinivas (1962: 85-86) has stated that due to the migration of Brahmins to the towns, the non-Brahmins refuse to show the same respect which they showed before, and inter-caste eating and drinking taboos are also somewhat weakened. Ghurye (1961: 202) also accepted the changes in the rigidities of the caste system due to the growth of city life with its migratory population. Kingsley Davis (1951) too held that the anonymity, congestion, mobility, secularism and changeability of the city makes the operation of the caste virtually impossible.

Narmadeshwar Prasad made an investigation of five castes in Bihar to find out the impact of urban-industrial forces on caste relations. He studied a village in Chhapra district on the one hand and proper Chhapra town – an urban industrial area – on the other hand. The five castes studied were: Brahmins, Rajputs, Ahirs, Dhobis and Chamars. He selected twenty persons from each caste both from the rural and the urban-industrial areas. Thus, in all he studied two hundred persons for comparing the functioning of castes in a village and a city. He found (1956: 130-134) that in the village, each caste is a well-knit homogeneous group, inter-dining is tabooed, *jati panchayat* is all powerful, *jati-bhoj* is compulsory, all castes co-operate in social and religious functions, castes continue to be endogamous and caste hierarchy exists. On the other hand, in the city, caste solidarity is absent, people of different castes take food together in the common room, caste panchayat is casual and temporary, *jati-bhoj* is not universal and no caste co-operation exists in socio-religious functions. Studying the change in the traditional occupations of the five castes, he found that while there was complete deviation in the urban-industrial area, it was partial in the rural areas. Out of one hundred persons studied in the village, only 19 per cent (Ahir: 9, Rajput: 7 and Brahmins: 3) had deviated from their traditional occupations. This shows that the traditional functions assigned by castes no longer operate in an urban-industrial situation. Comparing the attitudes of the respondents towards the inter-caste marriages, he found that in both the rural and urban areas, the majority of respondents (87% in rural area and 75% in urban area) disliked it. All this shows the impact of urban situation on the caste system.

**Post-independence Period (1947-1993 A.D.)**

After the political independence of the country, the important factors, besides industrialization and urbanization, which have affected the caste system are: the merger of various states, enactment of

several laws, spread of education, socio-religious reform, westernization, growth of modern professions, spatial mobility, and the growth of market economy. Before the independence, some states were the strongholds of the caste system; but after the liquidation of the native states and framing of the new constitution for the whole country which generates justice, liberty and equality to all persons irrespective of the difference in caste, creed or religion, and which has abolished the untouchability, the caste system no longer functions on rigid lines.

Literacy has also increased. While the literacy rate in 1941 was 16.1, in 1991 it increased to 52.1 (63.8% among males and 39.4% among females). Education makes people liberal, broadminded, rational and democratic. Educated people do not accept the caste norms and caste practices blindly. They are neither conservative nor superstitious. No wonder the caste system is least rigid in the urban areas today.

The notion that a person is defiled by a lower caste man coming in contact with him is no longer universally held by Hindus. Taboos against some foods and against accepting food and water from persons of other castes have also gradually been weakened under the weight of modern conditions. However, some caste organizations have come to be strengthened. In states like Bihar, some upper and lower castes have formed their own *senas* (militant groups) to protect their interests. Politics has come to be affected much by the caste. Some castes have started consolidating their groups to secure greater social and political power. Feeling of casteism has increased. In some states, even intercaste conflicts have increased. Some castes, fearing that some other castes will gain an advantage over them, have started building up their educational, economic, and religious position and tearing down their hated rivals. On the other hand, the lot of scheduled castes has been slowly improved. They are offered more educational and service opportunities through the reservation policy. Though untouchability cannot be described as a thing of the past, yet its practice has diminished massively.

### ***Broad Changes in the Caste System***

Though the changed structure of caste in the contemporary India has been analyzed separately in this chapter, yet briefly sepaking, the following outcomes in caste functioning may be pointed out in the present times:

- Caste system is not in the process of abolition but is making adequate adjustment with modern changes.
- The religious basis of caste has cramped.
- Old social practices of imposing restrictions of varied types have dwindled. Caste no longer restricts newly valued individual freedom.
- Caste no longer determines the occupational career of an individual, though his social status continues to be dependent on his caste membership.
- Serious efforts are being made to grant equality to the out-castes and the backward castes which had suffered because of the restrictions imposed by the caste system.
- Inter-caste strifes are increasing. However, these are more for achieving power than on grounds of ritual status.
- Casteism not only continues to prevail in community life but in a way it has increased.
- The *jajmani* system in the villages has weakened affecting inter-caste relations.
- The dominance of a caste in a village no longer depends upon its ritual status.
- Caste and politics have come to affect each other.
- On the one hand, some caste organizations have strengthened while on the other hand, a large number of castes have lost their group solidarity and a sense of responsibility.
- Caste no longer acts as a barrier to social progress and to nation's development. India is on the move in spite of the caste system.

## **8.4 Functions of Caste**

The functional necessity of stratification of a society into different groups (whether classes or castes) is the requirement faced by any society of placing and motivating individuals in the social structure. As a functioning mechanism, a society concerns itself with motivation at two levels: to distribute its members in social positions, and to induce them to perform the duties attached to these positions. The Indian system of stratification ascribes a fixed status to individuals which determines their rights and duties.

According to Laurence Ross (1968: 404), the important functions of the caste system are: (1) modification of conflict between strata, (2) support of Hindu culture, (3) social integration on an inter-class basis, and (4) facilitation of personal adjustment.

Hutton (1961: 111-123) has discussed the functions of caste from three points of view: (i) from the point of view of an individual, (ii) from the point of view of caste as a group/unit, and (iii) from the point of view of society.

### **From the Point of View of an Individual**

Caste provides an individual a fixed social milieu from birth from which neither wealth or poverty, nor success or disaster can remove him, unless he so violates the standards of behaviour laid down by his caste that it ex-communicates him temporarily or permanently. He is provided with a permanent body of associations which controls almost all his behaviour and contacts. An individual's caste, canalizes his choice in marriage, dictates to him the customs to be observed in matters of diet, observance of ceremonial uncleanliness, etc., prescribes rituals to be observed at birth, marriage and death, determines his occupation, acts as his club or benefit-society, and provides him protection against various exigencies of life. In short, it predetermines his pattern of behaviour in this world to a very considerable degree, leaving much less to individual choice.

### **From the Point of View of Caste as a Group/Unit**

Firstly, caste determines the membership of the community, that is, a particular caste cannot increase its membership except by means of an increase in the number of births within the caste. If we accept M.N. Srinivas's view that recruitment from outside is possible in castes through the process of sanskritization, the number of persons so recruited is bound to be extremely small.

Secondly, the caste system assigns social status and preferential treatment to each caste in relationship to other castes. But in this respect, it may be remembered that the exact status of a given caste is impossible to determine as it varies from village to village and region to region. For example, the Nai (barber) caste in a caste-hierarchy in one village may have the fifth position but in another village it may have the sixth position and in yet another the fourth position. Similarly, in one village, the Sunar (goldsmith) caste might be given higher status than the Yadav caste but in other, it may be given a low status. In spite of this flexibility, we can say that in any given area, the status of any given caste is roughly prescribed with reference to other castes with which it is in contact, by the system as it obtains locally.

Thirdly, the caste system enables the members of a caste to remain united as one group. Benefiting from this unity, a caste is able to raise its position in the society. Though this higher rank may not be very easy to achieve and may perhaps be accomplished only in the course of generations but it has been done and it is being done. Hutton (1961) says that the position of a caste is raised by altering the canons of behaviour of its members in the matter of diet and marriage and taking a new name of some higher caste. He gives some examples like Chandals of Bengal ('Chandal' is a word which is despised and abhorred by everybody; but the Bengali Chandals have succeeded in getting themselves known by a name which is free from traditional shame or reproach or discredit), Brittal Baniyas of Assam (apparently they are Doms but now they are spoken of as Baniyas), Viswakarma Brahmins (artisans), Gahlot Rajputs (Chamars), Nai Brahmins (barbers), and Yadavs (cow-keeping castes) of northern India.

Some tribal groups have also started claiming a higher position in the society; for example, Kolis in western India, Turis in Bihar, Paliyan in Madras, Rabha in Assam, and Maria Gonds and Bhils in Madhya Pradesh. Many occupational groups too have been taken into Hindu society as readymade

castes, for example, Julaha (weavers), Teli (oil pressers), Chauffeurs (car-drivers). Among the chauffeurs, those who drive Rolls Royce give themselves higher status than those who drive Ford. Similarly, Fiat or Maruti drivers claim higher status than those who drive Standard car. Enthoven (*Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, January 1932) has said that modern India, having created a caste of chauffeurs from the menials who tend motor cars, is almost ripe for a Rolls Royce caste rejecting food or marriage with the Ford drivers. Many religious groups also have been accepted as separate castes; for example, Brahmo Samjhis, Arya Samajis, and Kabir Panthis. Even though these groups have broken away from Hinduism yet they are considered as Hindus. Cunningham has said that lower castes can raise their status through education also. The Census Superintendent of Assam wrote in 1931: "The respectability of a community in Assam can be generally measured by the number of persons belonging to that community who are in government service." Thus, as a body, caste serves communities as a ladder for rising in the social scale.

Lastly, caste transmits culture (skill, knowledge, and behaviour) and the benefits and advances, achieved in man's struggle to control environment, from generation to generation. Well-guarded craft secrets are also transferred to descendants through this process. In this context, caste acts as an occupational guild in which form it can effectively influence the actions of individuals or of corporate bodies outside its own membership; for example, every municipality depends upon its scavenging castes. The strike of sweepers has the most devastating effect on the health and comfort of an urban population. The united action of caste achieves its objects. Such united action of castes is found in elections also, though such action is never beneficial to the political life of the community.

### From the Point of View of Society

Firstly, the caste system provides for functions necessary to social life, and ranging from education to scavenging or service of the most menial type. It makes this provision under the sanction of a religious dogma, the belief in *karma* (deeds) which renders the superficially inequitable distribution of functions acceptable as being part of the divine order of the universe. The caste claims that by performing these functions, if one acquires merit in one life, he may rise in the scale in the birth. Similarly, if one is suffering from any degradation in caste in this life, it is by reason of its transgressions in the previous life. In this way, caste acts as a stabilizer. Thus, Shanans of South India, in spite of the wealth they have acquired, have no right to build two-storied houses, to wear gold ornaments, or to use an umbrella. The very nature of the (caste) system discourages attempts to surmount existing barriers of rank or occupation. Hutton (1961: 122) has maintained that the truth is that caste has developed as a quasi-organic structure in which a caste stands to the society as a whole in a relation almost analogous to that of an individual cell to the greater organism of which it forms part.

Secondly, caste performs the genetic function of maintaining balance in the sex ratio. India is a country in which males always out-number females. While in 1901 and 1911, there were 905-908 females per 1,000 males, their number in 1971 was 911, in 1981 was 919, and in 1991 was 913. Amongst Hindus, there are 953 females for every 1,000 males. The caste system contributes to the preponderance of masculinity. Westermarck takes the view that a mixture of race leads to an increase in the ratio of females to males. This is because mixed marriages produce more girls. Hutton has said that this may not be proved but there is a good deal of evidence to support the theory that pure-blooded societies produce an excess of males. The caste system, through its rule of endogamy, preserves what is called in Genetics 'the pure line'. With the preservation of pure line, the perpetuation of all characters common to it necessarily follows.

Thirdly, caste acts as a political stabilizer, that is, it keeps political order free from change. It was this function of the caste system which moved Abbe Dubois (*A Description of the People of India*, 1817, quoted by Hutton in *Caste in India*, 1961) to regard the caste system as being responsible for (a) the preservation of India from complete barbarism, (b) as the sure basis of orderly government, (c) as defence against despotism (uncontrolled government), (d) as a means of preserving arts, and (e) as a means of preserving the Hindu pattern of culture under the regime of alien conquerors. S.C. Hill (*Origin of Caste System in India*, 1930) also holds the same view. He writes: "Whereas in Europe, we are accustomed to think of the political and social systems of a country as one and the same thing, the Hindus regard them as distinct and separate. Thus, his intimate life, the life which to the Hindu

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really matters, is altogether independent of the political conditions which happen to prevail". He further writes: "Since social life in India is entirely independent of any form of political government, it remains permanently stable" (*Ibid*:120). Hutton (1961: 121) too is of the opinion that "Indian society has survived a vast number of invasions, famines, revolutions, and social upheavals of all kinds, including conquests by invaders of alien religion, essentially antagonistic to Hinduism, and there can be no doubt that this is largely due to the caste system on which that society has constructed itself, a system which often survived even conversion to Islam or Christianity". Thus, the caste system has conferred social stability on India because it provides for unlimited extension of the society by the inclusion as integral parts of the structure of any number of segregative and particularizing entities.

Fourthly, caste integrates society, that is, it combines various groups, institutions and sub-systems (or parts) into whole. Hutton has said that one important function of caste, perhaps the most important of all its functions, and the one which above all others makes caste in India a unique institution, is or has been, to integrate Indian society, to weld into one community the various competing, if not incompatible, groups composing it. He thinks that had the national and political groups not been absorbed in Indian society through the caste system, they would have remained as unadjusted and possibly subversive elements. Between the conquerors and the conquered, the conquerors have always predominated and tried to absorb other group. On the other hand, the conquered have always remained disgruntled. They do not adjust and accommodate. There are thus always conflicts between the two. But India has always accommodated the group of conquerors and thus maintained its stability. When Europeans and Bantus in South Africa and Whites and Negroes in America have failed in solving their problems, Indian society has succeeded in it through the caste system. Thus, caste may be described as integrator of peoples. Gilbert (cf. Hutton, 1961: 120) too has said that India has developed a system of castes which, as a scheme of social adjustment, compares rather favourably with the European system of warring territorial nationalities.

Ram Krishna Mukherjee (1957: 60) has stated that British India made serious onslaughts on the sanctions of the caste system; yet it remains a fact that almost the entire rural population and the great majority of the town-dwellers in British India went on adhering to the caste discipline of inter-dining and inter-marriage and caste consciousness remained in the pores of society. Raising the question as to what supplied the social force to this kind of existence which upheld the village community system of India for centuries as unaffected by the political clouds over the Indian sky, R.K. Mukherjee (*Ibid*: 70) says that the answer (to this question) lies in the fact that besides its self-sufficient and autonomous character and the simplicity of the organization which maintained villages as independent units in society vis-a-vis the outer world, internally village communities were stabilized by the caste system. It was the *jati* division of the society which provided the internal mechanism of the village community system and stabilized it socially and ideologically.

Furnival has described the Indian society a plural society in which various groups form a social whole maintaining their distinctive characteristic. He has said: "The stability of the Indian plural society is due to the fact that the caste system has afforded a place in society into which any group, be it racial, social, religious or occupational, can be fitted as a co-operating part of the social whole, while retaining its own distinctive character and its separate individual life." Sherring (1939: 274) is also of the opinion that caste is in a certain sense a bond of union among all classes of the Hindu community. Referring to these social functions, Hutton (1961: 115) has opined that the functions which caste performs for an individual may be and are performed for individuals by other institutions in other societies. The functions performed by the caste system for the caste group as a body will be found performed in some more or less analogous way in other systems by such social groups as exist in them. But the functions which it has performed and still performs for the Indian society as a whole are not found elsewhere.

## **8.5 Demerits and Merits of the Caste System**

### **8.5.1 Demerits of the Caste System**

The analysis of the structure of the caste system has raised the question of its dysfunctional and functional aspects. The important demerits of the caste system have been described as follows:



**1. It acts as a barrier to social progress**

Durkheim has suggested that the function of division of labour is to give an individual more freedom because it substitutes mechanical economy with an organic economy. The caste system created the division of labour which denied freedom to an individual. In the rigid caste system, occupation was determined by the ascribed status instead of contract, and transition from ascribed status to contract, according to Henry Maine, is an essential feature of political progress. The caste system did not make such transition possible.

Some say that in the twentieth century, India has made an industrial progress but it is not because of the caste system; rather it is in spite of the caste system. Industrialization and technological changes are linked with political system, economic system and the value (or caste) system. The caste system was a barrier in our progress and modernization. People followed the crafts and skills transmitted to them by their ancestors. Introducing change was considered a sin. The carpenter would use the age-old adze but not the saw; even in sawing wood, he would use age-old methods and not the modern machinery. So was the case with weaver, blacksmith, goldsmith and even cultivator. Caste thus made no compromises (Sherring, *Ibid.*). P.N. Bose too has pointed out that caste system has acted essentially to impose that attitude of mind needed to raise men from savagery but to stop them half way on the road to progress.

**2. It thwarts political unity**

According to Bougle (*Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 2, 1958), patriotism for the Hindus consists of attachment to the caste system. Therefore, they are unable to unite except in the very culture pattern that divides them. Why are Hindus attached to caste so much? This is because caste has a religious sanction which prescribes that perfection can only be attained by a man who does not deviate from the duties of caste. In the *Gita*, it has been emphasized that one's own duty, though defective, is better than another's duty well performed. Manu code is that obedience of custom and performance of duty are transcendent laws. Observance of caste duties is considered as *dharma* in Hinduism. It is a moral obligation. Thus, the social practices of caste are inextricably tied up with religion and their sanction is reinforced by the doctrine of *karma*. Sherring (*Ibid*: 276) has stated: "With many Hindus, the highest form of religious observance is the complete fulfilment of the claims of caste; and most of them conceive breach of caste discipline as a sin rather than violation of moral law. Thus, so long people give more importance to their caste, the national unity is bound to suffer.

**3. It acts as a screen and justification for persistent anti-social conduct**

We have a story in which a fisherman justified his sin against the fish by an appeal to the practice of his caste. In another case, an identical argument is pleaded by a butcher for practising his hereditary trade. Precisely, the same justification has been used by many criminal castes to justify their behaviour towards their fellowmen. For example, the *thugs* (swindlers) strangled their victims to the honour of their goddess Bhavani as well as to the enrichment of their pockets. They considered that their victims were killed by God, with them as his agents, their appointed job being to kill travellers (Sleeman, J.L., *Thug or a Million Murders*, 1939). Other criminal castes like Korava (robbers) regard their criminal practices as justified by their membership of the caste to which they belong. According to Abbe Dubois, people of Kallan caste regard their profession of robber, without disguise, as their birth-right and conceive their calling no way discreditable to themselves or their tribe, as having legitimately descended to them by way of inheritance. So, far from shrinking at the appellation, if one of them be asked who he is, he will coolly answer that he is a robber.

**4. It is responsible for the low status of women**

Caste imposes many restrictions on women; for example, on education, on participation in religious discussions, on participation in politics, and so forth. It insists on the marriage of girls before they reach the age of puberty. It also forbids girls' marriage even if widowed in infancy.

**5. It is responsible for the low status and unjust treatment of outcastes and lowcaste people**

The uppercaste people have deprived the lowcaste people of human rights and privileges. They command servile (like slaves) obedience from all the groups at the bottom and give them

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subordinate position. In fact, it is in the treatment of the untouchable castes that the working of the caste system is most open to criticism. A cobbler (*mochi*) or a *regar* gets the low status only because he tans the leather and deals with the dead body of animals. A toddy-drawer's low status is due to his dealing with liquor which is banned from use. A sweeper's low status is because he deals with night-soil and refuse and all those unclean things we throw away. A washerman's low status is because he washes the dirty clothes. The caste system treats all these castes as outcastes, so much so that even their contact is supposed to involve pollution. Their low position is the result of prejudices and taboos. The number of such exterior castes is 133. 45 million or 15.7 per cent of the country's total population of 850 million (1991 Census). These people have meekly resigned themselves to their fate. Ross (1968: 412) has said that orthodox Hinduism with its promises of rewards in future births for caste conformity in this birth was truly 'the opiate of the people', dulling the senses of the oppressed to their terrible degradation and lulling them into silent acquiescence.

### 8.5.2 Merits of the Caste System

If India's caste system has demerits, it has some good consequences too. In fact, an evaluation of the caste system depends entirely on whether we look at it from the standards of a static or of a dynamic society. The important merits of the caste system could be pointed out as under:

**1. Hindu life was given strong continuity by the religious basis of caste**

One of the important characteristics of Hindu culture has been the continuity of joint family system whose customs and traditions are mostly linked with religion and maintained by the Brahmins. For example, the *shradh* ceremony observed by the Hindu families is sanctified by religious norms and values and the 'worship' on this occasion stretches back to three generations of ancestors. Likewise, many mystical customs and traditions and miraculous hymns are preserved and handed down from father to son by word of mouth. Their sanctity depended not merely on their words but on every accent rightly placed. There was need for men who could specialize in the study of the texts, comprehend the symbolic meaning of the ritual and assist in the perpetuation of this tradition. This philosophic literature was thus transmitted orally from father to son for many centuries. This would have been impossible if the specialization had not been made hereditary and given a religious basis. This basis was provided by the caste system which enabled the Hindu thought and learning to survive for fifty centuries.

**2. Arts and crafts were preserved through father-son apprenticeship**

Indians, since beginning, possessed arts and crafts which were considered superior in all respects. Almost every household in the Indus Valley sites had its hand spindles. Archaeologists have ascertained that these people were the first to spin and weave fibre from the real cotton plant. The country's arts and crafts survived until they were destroyed by the competition of western machine goods in the nineteenth century. It was the caste system which, through occupational endogamy, supplied the number of workers needed in every craft.

**3. A pattern was provided to numerous competing groups to co-exist side by side with little or no conflict**

There have been numerous and diverse races, religions, linguistic groups, etc., in India. The country faced many wars between local kings and acute conflicts between different social groups. Yet the caste system enabled the heterogeneous people to live contentedly side by side with harmonious and stable relationships. The method adopted by the Brahmins (who dominated the caste system after 650 A.D. after overthrowing Buddhism) to accommodate various diverse groups was based on compromise than elimination of groups. The caste system thus prevented strifes among the numberless groups.

**4. A firm group solidarity and a sense of responsibility grew up within each caste**

All members of the caste and sub-caste helped each other in marriage and funeral rites and on all festivals and solemnities. This brought the members close to one another and developed a stable bond of social relationship amongst them. Besides, the rich members of the caste helped the poor members and provided necessary security to them. Class differences did not affect the caste relations

until modern times. Individualism was subordinated to collectivism. The caste loyalty was the result of absence of competition which enabled the strong to exploit the weak. No wonder, Hinduism always exalted the static caste and the welfare of all its conformist members.

#### 5. Caste status lessened maladjustment of individuals in the society

The caste system did not permit personal choice of any type to individuals. Their occupation, marriage, and social status was pre-determined. Sons followed their fathers in career aspirations and daughters followed their mothers' footsteps of ministering to husband and children. Even friends and companions for the individuals were decided by their birth. The caste system thus helped individuals in all respects in their adjustment in society. Since every path of an individual was prefixed, it lessened his maladjustment in different situations and obviated his frustrations, though it hampered his broad personality development.

### 8.6 Present Structure of the Caste System

The caste system has neither disintegrated nor is it disappearing in present India despite many modifications. It continues to perform important functions legitimized by religion. Harold Gould (1987: 156) is of the opinion that in contemporary urban India, caste persists in the form of complex networks of interest groups while in the rural India, it functions as a system of social strata which are hierarchically graded, endogamous, and occupationally and ritually specialized. In both communities (rural and urban), caste remains an extremely viable social institution.

During the last four and a half decades, that is, between 1947 and 1993, caste structure has considerably changed. Though the two important features of hereditary membership and hierarchy have not changed at all but we do find some change in the endogamy characteristic and a significant change in the characteristics of traditional occupation, in commensal restrictions, in the idea of purity and pollution, in restrictions on social relationships, and in the powers enjoyed by the caste councils. The most important change we find nowadays in the caste system is that there has grown a desire among the lower castes to improve their lot and as a consequence, the higher castes keep on attempting to make them stick to their societal position. This has led to prejudices and conflicts among different castes. The conflict is between those who demand rapid improvement of their lot and those who find too much is demanded too fast.

The question that naturally needs to be examined is: Is caste system changing or weakening or disintegrating? There are two views: one view is that caste system is fast changing and is weakening though it is not being disintegrated or abolished. To this school belonged early scholars of 1950s, 1960s and 1970s like D.N. Majumdar, Kuppuswami, Kali Prasad, Gardner Murphy, and Max Weber, and scholars of 1980s and early 1990s like R.K. Mukherjee, E.J. Miller, and M.N. Srinivas. The other view is that caste system is not transforming itself so fast and the changes are gradual. To this school belong early scholars like I.P. Desai, Ghurye, Narmadeshwar Prasad and Kapadia and present scholars like Damle, Dumont, Andre Beteille, Harold Gould, Yogendra Singh, S.C. Dube and T.N. Madan.

D.N. Majumdar, while explaining how the caste system has fastly changed, has referred to the fusion and fission of castes and assimilation of tribes. Kuppuswami and Kali Prasad pointed out some basic changes in the caste system. They did this by pointing out separately to the rural and the urban societies and the radical changes found at these two levels. Kuppuswami in his study of attitudes of students in Madras (see Kapadia, *Sociological Bulletin*, September 1962) pointed out that a large proportion of students asserted that they looked upon the caste system as intolerable and were prepared to abolish it. Kali Prasad (*Social Integration Research: A Study in Inter-Caste Relationship*, Lucknow University, 1954: 3) conducted a study on communal tensions in 1952 in which he incorporated a study of intercaste relations also. The lower castes were represented by Harijans. His results revealed that 90.0 per cent of the upper caste people accepted the lower caste people as their fellow diners. Another study of Kali Prasad (1954) also presented similar results. His findings supported the statement that caste cleavages are levelled up fastly. Gardner Murphy (*In the Minds of Men*, 1953: 65), who conducted UNESCO's social tension studies in India during 1950-52 concluded that caste system has come to a challenge. Max Weber's view was that all caste relations have been shaken and the intellectuals are the bearers of specific nationalism. Ram Krishna Mukherjee (1957)

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has written that “the dynamics of caste change has both economic and social aspects. The economic aspect is related to the change in occupational specialization of castes and the social aspect concerns with the adoption of higher caste customs, giving up of polluting professions, etc. There are changes in both these aspects and these changes provide the background of change in the caste system”. He further said that these changes have led to the rise of tension between the higher and the lower castes, for there is a threat to the *status quo* of the upper castes. His opinion is that the caste system has markedly changed in the urban areas where rules on social intercourse and caste commensalities have relaxed and civil and religious disabilities of lower castes have been lifted. E.J. Miller, while referring to the changes in the caste system, pointed out that. “In the past, inter-caste relations involved traditionally ordained and clear-cut rights and obligations, authority and subordination. But at present with the change in the economic structure of the village, pattern of inter-caste relations has changed. Inter-caste conflict has emerged in the village structure as a result of the efforts made by the lower castes to move up in the social scale.

Along with Miller, several other scholars like Bryce Ryan, M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dube have also suggested the changing pattern of the caste system. M.N. Srinivas (1952, reprinted 1985) has maintained that the mutual rights and obligations among the castes are crumbling down. Change of loyalty of an individual from his village to his caste is noted. Change has also come through sanskritization and westernization. Brahmins were preceded by the British even though they are pork and beef, drank whisky and smoked a pipe. But because they had the economic and political power, they were feared, admired and respected. The result was that new and secular caste system superimposed on the traditional system in which the British, the new Kshatriyas, stood at the top.

But the scholars of the other viewpoint (who describe the changes in the caste system taking place slowly and gradually and in some cases even superficial) do not consider these changes as being disintegrative of the caste system as a whole. These scholars, though do not imply the dissolution of caste, yet have made it clear that caste today is not the same as it was half a century or a century ago. For example, Desai and Damle (1981: 66) said: “The magnitude of the changes in the parts of the caste system is not as great as it is believed to be. These changes have not affected the essential aspects of the caste system as a whole.” Ghurye (1961: 209-210) was of the opinion that caste system has shed some of its features. He said: “Caste no longer rigidly determines an individual’s occupation but continues to prescribe almost in its old vigour the circle into which one has to marry. One has still to depend very largely on one’s caste for help at critical periods of one’s life, like marriage and death.” He further said: “Though caste has ceased to be a unit administering justice, yet it has not lost its hold on its individual members who still continue to be controlled by the opinion of the caste” (*Ibid*: 190). He believed that vitality of the (caste) system in social life is as strong today as it ever was (*Ibid*: 211).

Narmadeshwar Prasad (1956: 240) analyzed caste functions at two levels: ritual (marriage, dining, etc.) and ideology (attitude to Brahmins uniting to fight elections, etc.). He found that changes were taking place on both the levels of ritual and ideology. In spite of these changes, he maintained that the caste system as such remains very much the same. Changes within the system do take place but not beyond the system.

Kapadia (“Caste in Transition” in *Sociological Bulletin*, September 1962: 75) tried to study the transitional nature of the different characteristics of the caste system by focusing on four characteristics: caste councils, commensal taboos, ceremonial purity, and endogamy. Analyzing the functioning of caste councils, he found that when caste councils were very powerful in 1860s and in 1910s, in 1960s also though they were legally deprived of their authority to enforce their traditional norms upon their members by ex-communication, yet they continued to regulate the conduct and minds of their members. Talking of the change in the commensal taboo, he found that though it was true that even in the rural areas inter-dining, where members of all castes (including the Harijans) sit together in a row, was not uncommon in 1960s, but at the same time there was evidence to indicate that these inhibitions were not completely uprooted psychologically even in the urban areas (*Ibid*: 74). Referring to the change in ceremonial purity, Kapadia (*Ibid*: 77) stated that the Hindu concept of pollution was very extensive in its scope and mandatory in its observance till the twenties of this century. These rules are still observed in some high caste families—more often in moffusil and rural areas. But on the whole, they may be said to have been almost dispensed with. Lastly, pointing to endogamy (*Ibid*:



77) he said that “the change in the endogamy characteristic of caste is not clearly intelligible. We do find the number of inter-caste marriages on the increase, particularly during the last twenty years. At the same time, we have clear evidence of the persistence of caste endogamy.” He thus concluded (*Ibid*: 87) that whatever people may say about caste, there is yet acceptance of caste inhibitions. There is an unmistakable evidence that caste is not on its last leg though it has undergone a significant change.

Dumont taking up the question of “what is the caste system becoming nowadays” in his book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1971: 217-18) holds that contemporary literature ‘exaggerates’ change. What is certain is that the caste society, as an overall framework, has not changed. There has been change the society and not the society. The only change that seems to have taken place is that the traditional interdependence of castes has been replaced by a universe of impenetrable blocks, self-sufficient and in competition with one another. Dumont calls this ‘the sub-stanzialization of caste’ (cf. T.N. Madan’s article in Dipankar Gupta (Ed.), *Social Stratification*, 1992: 82).

Andre Beteille (1977: 61-65) too has referred to some changes in the caste system; for example, in structural distance, in style of life, in commensal relations, and in endogamy, etc. In the past, structural distance among castes was maintained not only through the pursuit of different styles of life but by interdictions or prohibitions of various kinds – on marriage, commensality and social interchange in general. Today, the structural distance between two sub-divisions of the same subcaste is smaller than that between any of one of these and a subdivision of a different caste. Changes have also taken place in styles of life distinctive of particular castes in the traditional system. In the traditional system, the unit of commensality was defined fairly rigidly in terms of caste affiliation. In recent decades, there has been a gradual expansion of this unit. Today, Brahmins may interdine with ‘clean’ Sudras but not generally with members of the polluting castes. The unit of endogamy has also expanded, though to a far smaller extent. All these changes in the caste system, according to Beteille, are the result of geographical mobility, western education, creation of new occupation to which recruitment is at least in principle based on factors other than caste, process of modernization, and political factors. However, it is evident that internal differentiation has proceeded much further among some castes than others. Those castes which have been most open to westernization are probably the ones which have changed most. Such, for example, are Brahmins, Kayasths, Nairs, etc. and in general castes which have taken to western education and middleclass occupations and are predominantly urban in their distribution. Peasant castes in the rural areas have perhaps retained a greater measure of homogeneity and appear on the whole to have undergone less change.

Marx (*First Indian War of Independence*, 1959: 36) and Weber (*Religion of India*, 1958: 112) had two opposite viewpoints on the effects of industrialization while looking at India. Marx argued that colonialism had laid the foundation for the technological and economic changes, and these changes (or modern industry) will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour upon which rest the Indian castes which have been decisive impediments to the progress of Indian society. Weber concluded that caste had been a prime impediment to capitalist development and would always continue to inhibit the growth of capitalism in the future.

Harold Gould (1988: 158) concludes that the truth lies somewhere between these two positions. The effect of industrialization on caste system has gone further than Weber seems to have believed possible. But there has been no dissolution of caste on the scale Marx foresaw. Parsons (*The Social System*, 1952: 185) has characterized this reality through what he calls ‘adaptive structures’, which have mitigated the structural strains inherent in the exposure of people to competitive pressure where detailed universalistic discriminations are impracticable. Harold Gould holds that this feature (of adaptive structure) of caste in India is evident not only in cities but in the villages too where the caste system continues to perform functions of security, solidarity and preferential treatment to groupings of people.

## 8.7 Future of Caste

There is no trace of caste system losing its grip. The change is in the attitudes of different castes to rise above and gain social prestige. Changes in the caste scheme are continuous and regular but the caste system remains intact for all practical purposes. The change is not in the direction of dissolving the



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caste system. Some sort of class consciousness has crept into different castes. Electrified by the in group feeling, they want to hold the caste system all the more tenaciously. Nowadays, a caste tries to organize itself for social, economic, and political purposes. Elections are being fought on caste basis. There are caste organizations like All India Kshatriya Mahasabha, All India Mathur Sangh, All India Bhargava Organization, etc.

The progressive Hindus take three distinct stands about the future of the caste system:

1. There are people who consider caste as something evil and want that it should be abolished.
2. There are others who think that the caste system has degenerated and efforts should be made to reinstate the traditional four orders. The greatest exponent of this thought was Mahatma Gandhi (*Young India*, 1919: 479-88).
3. There are also people who want to continue the caste system but to reinstate it under totally different conditions. These people want to amalgamate various sub-castes having cultured unity and economic similarity. Gradually, the castes which will approximately be on a footing of equality will consolidate and ultimately a casteless society will be established. These people want the process to be slow because it would afford sufficient time for education and the formation of informed opinion with the requisite mental adjustment of those castes/classes which are not yet prepared for a wholesale change in their age-old customs (see Ghurye, 1961: 305-307).

Scholars like A.J. Toynbee, T.H. Marshall, P. Kodanda Rao, etc. have evaluated all these three schools of thought. Discussing first school led by Gandhi, they contend that it is impracticable because the only basis of assigning a particular order (out of four orders) to the persons is occupation they follow. In the present society, the occupations are so specialized and varied and the people of the same family are engaged in so many different occupations that it would be impossible to assign them a membership of one or the other order. Secondly, even if this settlement (of including castes in one or the other of the first three orders) was possible, what about the untouchable castes? Gandhiji being against untouchability naturally proposed some respectable status for these castes. But where are they to be provided for? In whatever order they may be included, there is bound to be tremendous protest from that order. Thirdly, assuming that the classification of castes in four orders would be possible, are we going to permit or prohibit marriages between these four orders? Are we going to continue restrictions in the matter of food, etc? Both would create their own problems. It may, therefore, be concluded that a return to the four-fold division of society is impractical and even if accomplished, it would serve no useful purpose.

Taking the other point of view that castes should be slowly abolished by consolidation of the sub-castes into larger castes, scholars have said that to propose this point is to miss the real problem. This method, they claim, was tried in Bombay for a number of decades but the results were disastrous. The sub-castes that joined together to create a big group retained their internal feelings of exclusiveness with undiminishing vigour. The new group took up rather a militant attitude against other castes, specially those which were popularly regarded as immediately higher or lower than the caste which it represented. Thus, scholars claimed that the spirit of caste patriotism or casteism is created and if we followed the second viewpoint, diminishing of casteism would be very difficult and it would create an unhealthy atmosphere for the full growth of national consciousness.

Some scholars have supported the third view that the caste system should be immediately abolished. They are of the opinion that we have to fight against and totally uproot casteism. Ghurye was one scholar who favoured this viewpoint. But he had expressed this opinion in about 1931. Since then more than six decades years have passed and lot of changes have taken place in Indian society, including independence of the country and the promulgation of many laws against the caste system. For example, the Constitution of India (implemented from January 26,1950) says that: (i) the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the ground of caste (equal opportunity to all castes), (ii) no citizen shall, on the ground of caste, be subject to restriction regarding access to or use of shops, restaurants and public wells and tanks (removal of civil disabilities), and (iii) the practice of untouchability is forbidden. Similarly, there are no restrictions on the following of any occupation. Feelings of equality, liberty and fraternity have been promoted which have cut the very roots of caste. A special officer (Commissioner) was appointed in 1951 for looking after the scheduled castes

and the back-ward classes. No more individual's caste is recorded in census. In spite of these changes in the last several decades, and particularly in the last two decades, casteism and the evils of caste have not been rooted out. Asirvatham (*A New Social Order*, 1957) was of the opinion that "whatever uses caste might have had in the past, it is a hinderance to progress today and therefore we should oppose it tooth and nail". D.N. Majumdar had also maintained in 1950s and 1960s that just as the broken or the poisoned finger is amputated and not the whole hand, similarly untouchability, exploitation of one caste by another, and such other harmful concomitants of the caste system should be done away with and not the whole system.

It is true that the caste system is a stumbling block in attaining the material and spiritual prosperity or in the social and national development. So long this cankerous system holds sway, we cannot achieve our social ideals. Hence, sooner its death-knell is sounded, the higher our prospects of progress. Yet it is a fact that it is not easy to abolish this system. We can only adopt some remedies to mitigate its evils.

The question arises, how to uproot or weaken caste? Some measures suggested in this regard are:

1. Inter-caste marriages need to be encouraged. For this, what is required is freedom to individuals in mate-selection, and proper opportunities to young people to come in contact with opposite sex, for example, co-education and co-work.
2. Well-supervised and guided clubs and recreation centres in big towns and cities for the youth of both sexes along side of hostels for students should be established. In these centres, they will forget such extraneous considerations as caste and transcend castebias in social interaction and social bonds.
3. The practice of recording caste and sub-caste as surname has antisocial potentialities and should be abolished. This will break the vitality of caste-feeling.
4. Caste should not be exploited for political purposes (say for seeking votes or assigning political positions, etc.) Unholy alliance of caste and politics jeopardizes not only the (communal) peace but even the security of the country.
5. Brahmins cannot be permitted to act as monopolist of priestly services. As such, a central organization with provincial branches may be started to impart training in priesthood. Iyer Commission in 1950s on Religious Endowment also recommended the institution of such a centre.

Narmadeshwar Prasad in his study of three areas – industrial, non-industrial and rural – was given a few remedies by his respondents (1,225) to weaken the caste system. These were: education and proper opportunity to all (39.1%), inter-caste marriage (35.3%), removal of untouchability (12.2%), and treating people on the basis of equality (13.4%). But will these measures really help in abolishing or even weakening the caste system? Perhaps not. Even the Supreme Court on giving its verdict on the implementation of Mandal Commission's report in November 1992 had virtually implied that caste alone would be the basis of reservation.

What are the properties and functions of caste which account for its continuance in the contemporary society? Two functions appear to be crucial today: (i) it provides opportunity for power, and (ii) it makes social mobility feasible (if we accept Srinivas's view of the possibility of sanskritization of a caste). Mobility – occupational, economic and social – in modern societies depends on education, training, material resources, nepotic networks available, personal influence, social refinement, as well as caste rank.

According to Harold Gould (1988: 162-164) castes functioning as adaptive structures in a modernizing Indian society (which make their future stable and secure) can be examined at three levels – political, economic and social. At the political level, both in cities and villages, caste, communalism and political factionalism are inextricably interwoven. Parliamentary democracy, linked to the secret ballot, has meant that the manipulation of numbers and the resources and favours which successful election to office confers, now occupies an important place. Since democratic politics is a competition among interest groups for the positions and spoils of power, it seems but natural that in India the formation of the interest groups would reflect the deepest lines of cleavage and solidarity in the society – those dividing castes and ethnic communities. Casteism affects political issues and political decisions. Caste

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appeals are followed by religious appeals. This is vindicated by both Hindu and Muslim political parties functioning in India. No wonder, caste will continue to be exploited at all political levels.

At the economic level though it is true that role recruitment, reward distribution, and economic mobility of workers and wage earners are determined on the basis of their performance qualities, and people of different castes take to modern occupations, but it is equally true that in villages particularly, their position depends on pervasive caste strictures and on inter-caste relations. In India today, the economic problem for individuals is scarcity – of wealth, jobs and opportunities – to participate in the new economic system that is slowly being built and is obviously the prime source of wealth and power. Thus, the aspects of caste that are most useful to the potential striver for position and power in the modern occupational order are nepotism and casteism.

At the social level, castes continue to be important in terms of determining the style of living as well as the rank positions of groups (castes) in which marriages are to be settled. Though the old ritual and occupational functions of castes are rapidly disappearing, yet caste endogamy is still preserved and the idea of the structure’s sanctity has been retained and adapted to the needs of modern social indexing. It is also to be noted that the elites of India are overwhelmingly of high caste origins whereas the lower and menial classes display a precisely opposite juxtaposition of castes.

It may thus be concluded that the caste system will continue to be a reality in the years and decades to come.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Choose the correct option:**

- (i) In 2001, the proportion of Dalit population was ..... .  
 (a) 16.2%                      (b) 15.5%                      (c) 20%                      (d) 25%
- (ii) In 1995 in all jobs of the central government services, ..... of the jobs were held by Dalits.  
 (a) 17.2%                      (b) 18.5%                      (c) 25%                      (d) 10%
- (iii) In 1997, India democratically elected ....., a Dalit, as the nation’s President.  
 (a) Jakir Hussain      (b) Abdul Kalam      (c) K.R. Narayanan      (d) None of these
- (iv) The Maurya Period started after the fall of Nanda Dynasty in ..... .  
 (a) 400 B.C.                      (b) 322 B.C.                      (c) 350 B.C.                      (d) None of these
- (v) The Brahmo Samaj movement founded by Raja Ram Mohan Ray in ..... .  
 (a) 1820                      (b) 1825                      (c) 1830                      (d) None of these

**8.8 Summary**

- The work on the history and philosophy of caste in the Vedic period is an outcome of an inquiry into the Vedic literature which mainly includes the *Vedas*, the *Brahmanas* and the *Upanishads*. Indian history, in a strictly historical sense, begins from the Rig Veda. The Vedic period is supposed to have started from 400 B.C. and continued up to 1000 B.C.
- The end of the Rigvedic period marks the beginning of the later Vedic age, popularly known as the Brahmanical age. The literature that represents this age includes the *Brahmanas* and older *Upanishads*. This period approximately covers the span of about four hundred years beginning from 1000 B.C.
- This growth of royal (Kshatriya) power and prerogatives on the one hand and the impossible demands of the Brahmins on the other was the chief cause of this struggle.
- In the Epic period (600-323 B.C.), therefore, we find that the class differentiation grew. Taking advantage of the wars among the Kshatriya rulers themselves, the Brahmins succeeded in organizing themselves as an exclusive class.
- The racial factor, the occupational bias, the philosophy of action, and the religious concept of purity and pollution—all contributed to the formation of the caste system.

- Kautilya, a Brahmin minister of Chandragupta Maurya, a Sudra ruler, tried to remove various restrictions imposed by the Brahmins on the Sudras by declaring that the royal law would supersede the *dharma* law.
- The last Maurya ruler was killed by his Brahmin commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga who later on became the ruler himself in 184 B.C. and established a new dynasty called Sunga dynasty which ruled for 112 years (184–72 B.C.).
- After the collapse of the Gupta empire, northern India again became a congeries of small states and many petty kingdoms arose in the course of next fifty years. But under Harsha Vardhana (606-647 A.D.), these disintegrating units were brought under the central authority and the political unity of India was restored.
- When foreign armies attacked India, they were more often than not met singly, each individual clan in its turn, with disastrous results for the country. A large number of new castes and sub-castes sprang up. The Brahmins tightened their bonds of caste and defended themselves by the increased rigidity of caste associations.
- The aboriginal tribes, as they became accessible, gradually entered the religious and social systems of the Hindus with whom they came into contact.
- The gradual development of industry brought division of labour. The Aryans, with better paying occupations, protected the interests of their children by assigning them the traditional family occupation, combined with guild endogamy.
- After the political independence of the country, the important factors, besides industrialization and urbanization, which have affected the caste system are: the merger of various states, enactment of several laws, spread of education, socio-religious reform, westernization, growth of modern professions, spatial mobility, and the growth of market economy.
- Durkheim has suggested that the function of division of labour is to give an individual more freedom because it substitutes mechanical economy with an organic economy. The caste system created the division of labour which denied freedom to an individual.

## 8.9 Key-Words

1. Chauffeurs : car drivers
2. Julaha : weavers
3. Teli : oil- pressers

## 8.10 Review Questions

1. Discuss the changing structure of caste.
2. What are the new trends found in the caste system of modern India?
3. Explain the factors and functions of caste system.
4. What are merits and demerits of caste system? Discuss.
5. Briefly explain the present structure of the caste system.

## Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (i) (a)                      (ii) (a)                      (iii) (c)                      (iv) (b)                      (v) (a)

## 8.11 Further Readings



Books

1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 9: Status of Women

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand Gender Discrimination
- Know about Women in Ancient India
- Explain Changing Status of Women
- Discuss Violence against Women

### Introduction

Over the years, some sociologists and non-sociologists have devoted time and effort to assess the problems plaguing women and to study the quality of change in the status of women in our society. While a few writers have referred to the legal rights enjoyed by women in marriage, inheritance and participation in public affairs, others have referred to the still prevalent inequality and discrimination suffered by women due to the social attitudes of males and the existing customs and traditions. Howsoever high the status of women might have been raised under the law, in practice they continue to suffer from discrimination, harassment and humiliation. They are not taken seriously in obtaining opinions, not treated as equals to men, and not given due respect. There are cases of junior IAS/IPS women being harassed by senior IAS/IPS men, of air hostesses being humiliated by pilots, of junior female custom officials being ill-treated by senior male custom officials and of female clerks and typists being exploited by male officers. Cases of making suggestive overtures or making advances to female subordinates in telephone exchanges, secretariats, newspaper offices, five-star hotels, TV centres, colleges and universities, IITs, etc., have become common.

In the relationship between man and woman, it is an individual with a powerful personality who acquires a position of dominance. Generally, it is a man who commands power over a woman, though in a few cases, a woman also might exercise control over a man. In Indian culture, since the very early periods, women as a group have been dominated by men and their status has been low in the family and society. In the 1930s and 1940s, the commitment of the socio-political leaders to equality influenced the Indian women's movement to turn to liberal egalitarian values. For studying this change (in the status of women) from the early times to the present day, let us start from the early period.



## **9.1 Gender Discrimination**

Gender description refers to disparity between individuals due to gender. Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; binary gender systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed.

### **Natural Gender Differences**

There are natural differences between the sexes based on biological and anatomic factors, most notably differing reproductive roles. Biological differences include chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. There is a natural difference also in the relative physical strengths (on average) of the sexes.

### **Income Disparities Linked to Job Stratification**

Wage discrimination is the discrepancy of wages between two groups due to a bias towards or against a specific trait with all other characteristics of both groups being equivalent. In the case of gender inequality, wage discrimination exists between the male and female gender. Historically, gender inequality has favored men over similarly qualified women.

Income disparity between genders stems from processes that determine the quality of jobs and earnings associated with jobs. Earnings associated with jobs will cause income inequality to take form in the placement of individuals into particular jobs through individual qualifications or stereotypical norms. Placement of men or women into particular job categories can be supported through the human capital theories of qualifications of individuals or abilities associated with biological differences in men and women. Conversely, the placement of men or women into separate job categories is argued to be caused by social status groups who desire to keep their position through the placement of those in lower statuses to lower paying positions.

Human capital theories refer to the education, knowledge, training, experience, or skill of a person which makes them potentially valuable to an employer. This has historically been understood as a cause of the gendered wage gap but is no longer a predominant cause as women and men in certain occupations tend to have similar education levels or other credentials. Even when such characteristics of jobs and workers are controlled for, the presence of women within a certain occupation leads to lower wages. This earnings discrimination is considered to be a part of pollution theory. This theory suggests that jobs which are predominated by women offer lower wages than do jobs simply because of the presence of women within the occupation. As women enter an occupation, this reduces the amount of prestige associated with the job and men subsequently leave these occupations. The entering of women into specific occupations suggests that less competent workers have begun to be hired or that the occupation is becoming deskilled. Men are reluctant to enter female-dominated occupations because of this and similarly resist the entrance of women into male-dominated occupations.

The gendered income disparity can also be attributed in part to occupational segregation, where groups of people are distributed across occupations according to ascribed characteristics; in this case, gender. Occupational gender segregation can be understood to contain two components or dimensions; horizontal segregation and vertical segregation. With horizontal segregation, occupational sex segregation occurs as men and women are thought to possess different physical, emotional, and mental capabilities. These different capabilities make the genders vary in the types of jobs they are suited for. This can be specifically viewed with the gendered division between manual and non-manual labor. With vertical segregation, occupational sex segregation occurs as occupations are stratified according to the power, authority, income, and prestige associated with the occupation and women are excluded from holding such jobs.

As women entered the workforce in larger numbers since the 1960s, occupations have become segregated based on the amount femininity or masculinity presupposed to be associated with each occupation. Census data suggests that while some occupations have become more gender integrated (mail carriers, bartenders, bus drivers, and real estate agents), occupations including teachers, nurses,

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secretaries, and librarians have become female-dominated while occupations including architects, electrical engineers, and airplane pilots remain predominately male in composition. Based on the census data, women occupy the service sector jobs at higher rates than men. Women's overrepresentation in service sector jobs as opposed to jobs that require managerial work acts as a reinforcement of women and men into traditional gender roles that causes gender inequality.

Once factors such as experience, education, occupation, and other job-relevant characteristics have been taken into account, 41% of the male-female wage gap remains unexplained. As such, considerations of occupational segregation and human capital theories are together not enough to understand the continued existence of a gendered income disparity.

The glass ceiling effect is also considered a possible contributor to the gender wage gap or income disparity. This effect suggests that gender provides significant disadvantages towards the top of job hierarchies which become worse as a person's career goes on. The term glass ceiling implies that invisible or artificial barriers exist which prevent women from advancing within their jobs or receiving promotions. These barriers exist in spite of the achievements or qualifications of the women and still exist when other characteristics that are job-relevant such as experience, education, and abilities are controlled for. The inequality effects of the glass ceiling are more prevalent within higher-powered or higher income occupations, with fewer women holding these types of occupations. The glass ceiling effect also indicates the limited chances of women for income raises and promotion or advancement to more prestigious positions or jobs. As women are prevented by these artificial barriers from receiving job promotions or income raises, the effects of the inequality of the glass ceiling increase over the course of a woman's "career?"

Statistical discrimination is also cited as a cause for income disparities and gendered inequality in the workplace. Statistical discrimination indicates the likelihood of employers to deny women access to certain occupational tracks because women are more likely than men to leave their job or the labor force when they become married or pregnant. Women are instead given positions that dead-end or jobs that have very little mobility.

In Third World countries such as the Dominican Republic, female entrepreneurs are statistically more prone to failure in business. In the event of a business failure women often return to their domestic lifestyle despite the absence of income. On the other hand, men tend to search for other employment as the household is not a priority.

The gender earnings ratio suggests that there has been an increase in women's earnings comparative to men. Men's plateau in earnings began after the 1970s, allowing for the increase in women's wages to close the ratio between incomes. Despite' the smaller ratio between men and women's wages, disparity still exists. Census data suggests that women's earnings are 71 percent of men's earnings in 1999.

The gendered wage gap varies in its width among different races. Whites comparatively have the greatest wage gap between the genders. With whites, women earn 78% of the wages that white men do. With African Americans, women earn 90% of the wages that African American men do. With people of Hispanic origin, women earn 88% of the wages that men of Hispanic origin do.

There are some exceptions where women earn more than men: According to a survey on gender pay inequality by the International Trade Union Confederation, female workers in the Gulf state of Bahrain earn 40 per cent more than male workers.

**Professional education and careers**

The gender gap also appeared to narrow considerably beginning in the mid-1960s. Where some 5% of first-year students in professional programs were female in 1965, by 1985 this number had jumped to 40% in law and medicine, and over 30% in dentistry and business school. Before the highly effective birth control pill was available, women planning professional careers, which required a long-term, expensive commitment, had to "pay the penalty of abstinence or cope with considerable uncertainty regarding pregnancy." This control over their reproductive decisions allowed women to more easily make long-term decisions about their education and professional opportunities. Women are highly underrepresented on boards of directors and in senior positions in the private sector.

Additionally, with reliable birth control, young men and women had more reason to delay marriage. This meant that the marriage market available to any one woman who “delay[ed] marriage to pursue a career...would not be as depleted. Thus, the Pill could have influenced women’s careers, college majors, professional degrees, and the age at marriage.”

Specifically in China, birth control has become a necessity of the job for women that migrate from rural to urban China. With little job options left, they become sex workers and having some form of birth control helps to ensure their safety. However, the government of China does not regulate prostitution in China, making it more difficult for women to gain access to birth control or to demand that the men use condoms. This doesn’t allow for the women to be fully protected, since their health and safety is in jeopardy when they disobey.

### **Gender roles in parenting and marriage**

Sigmund Freud suggested that biology determines gender identity through identification with either the mother or father. While some people agree with Freud, others argue that the development of the gendered self is not completely determined by biology based around one’s relationship to the penis, but rather the interactions that one has with the primary caregiver(s).

According to the non-Freudian view, gender roles develop through internalization and identification during childhood. From birth, parents interact differently with children depending on their sex, and through this interaction parents can instill different values or traits in their children on the basis of what is normative for their sex. This internalization of gender norms can be seen through the example of which types of toys parents typically give to their children (“feminine” toys such as dolls often reinforce interaction, nurturing, and closeness, “masculine” toys such as cars or fake guns often reinforce independence, competitiveness, and aggression). Education also plays an integral role in the creation of gender norms.

Gender roles permeate throughout life and help to structure parenting and marriage, especially in relation to work in and outside the home.

### **Attempts in equalizing household work**

Despite the increase in women in the labor force since the mid-1900s, traditional gender roles are still prevalent in American society. Women are usually expected to put their educational and career goals on hold in order to raise children, while their husbands work. However, there are women who choose to work as well as fulfill their gender role of cleaning the house and taking care of the children. Despite the fact that different households may divide chores more evenly, there is evidence that supports that women have retained the primary caregiver role within familial life despite contributions economically. This evidence suggests that women who work outside the home often put an extra 18 hours a week doing household or childcare related chores as opposed to men who average 12 minutes a day in childcare activities. In addition to a lack of interest in the home on the part of some men, some women may bar men from equal participation in the home which may contribute to this disparity.

### **Gender inequalities in relation to technology**

Although the current generation is overall technology savvy, men typically are more skillful in technology. Surveys show that men rate their technological skills in activities such as basic computer functions and online participatory communication higher than women.

### **Gender stereotypes**

Cultural stereotypes are engrained in both men and women and these stereotypes are a possible explanation for gender inequality and the resulting gendered wage disparity. Women have traditionally been viewed as being caring and nurturing and are designated to occupations which require such skills. While these skills are culturally valued, they were typically associated with domesticity, so occupations requiring these same skills are not economically valued. Men have traditionally been viewed as the breadwinner or the worker, so jobs held by men have been historically economically valued and occupations predominated by men continue to be economically valued and pay higher wages.

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### **Sexism and discrimination**

Gender inequality can further be understood through the mechanisms of sexism. Discrimination takes place in this manner as men and women are subject to prejudicial treatment on the basis of gender alone. Sexism occurs when men and women are framed within two dimensions of social cognition.

Discrimination also plays out with networking and in preferential treatment within the economic market. Men typically occupy positions of power within the job economy. Due to taste or preference for other men because they share similar characteristics, men in these positions of power are more likely to hire or promote other men, thus discriminating against women.

Discrimination against men in the workplace is rare but does occur, particularly in health care professions. Only an estimated 0.4% of midwives in the UK are male and according to cbs only 1 % of all trainee nurses and only 2% of Secretaries are male.

Discrimination against women in the workplace also occurs. Only an estimated 1% of roofers in the US are female.

### **Variations by country or culture**

Gender inequality is a result of the persistent discrimination of one group of people based upon gender and it manifests itself differently according to race, culture, politics, country, and economic situation. It is furthermore considered a causal factor of violence against women. While gender discrimination happens to both men and women in individual situations, discrimination against women is an entrenched, global pandemic. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, rape and violence against women and girls is used as a tool of war. In Afghanistan, girls have had acid thrown in their faces for attending school. Considerable focus has been given to the issue of gender inequality at the international level by organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank, particularly in developing countries. The causes and effects of gender inequality vary by country, as do solutions for combating it.

#### **Asia**

Many Malay Muslim communities believe that passion and desire carry derogatory connotations, especially when it is applied to humans. The Muslim Malays believe that women have more sexual passion than men and that men have more logic.

One example of the continued existence of gender inequality in Asia is the “missing girls” phenomenon. It is estimated that due to the undervaluing of women, over 100 million males are living as a result of the infanticide of female children, sex selection for boys, allocation of economic and nutritional resources that are taken away from female children, and generalized violence.

#### **India**

Some studies have documented that in villages in India, women are often discouraged to seek education, which is seen as immoral. However, recent studies document remarkable success in efforts to improve girls’ primary education. However, when it comes to secondary education, girls are still disadvantaged. Moreover, women’s employment rates are still low and seem to have further declined in recent years. Recent studies also document unequal access to and control over family resources for Indian women including control over land and bank accounts as well as severe limitations on their geographical mobility.

In the Sitapur district, there is an event which involves men destroying gudiyas (rag dolls) that their sisters made the night before the festival. The long tradition reveals the embedded gender inequality within society. The bashing of the doll symbolizes the bashing of the spirit, to maintain control.

#### **United States**

The World Economic Forum measures gender equity through a series of economic, educational, and political benchmarks. It has ranked the United States as 19th (up from 31st in 2009) in terms of achieving gender equity. In the U.S., women are more likely than men to live in poverty, earn less money for the same work, are more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence and rape, and have less of a

political voice. The US Department of Labor has indicated that in 2009, “the median weekly earnings of women who were full-time wage and salary workers was... 80 percent of men’s”. The Department of Justice found that in 2009, “the percentage of female victims (26%) of intimate partner violence was about 5 times that of male victims (5%)”. “The United States ranks 41st in a ranking of 184 countries on maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth, below all other industrialized nations and a number of developing countries” and women only represent 20% of members of Congress. Gender inequality is thus a widespread and ingrained social and public health issue in the United States.

### Impact and counteractions

Gender inequality and discrimination is argued to cause and perpetuate poverty and vulnerability in society as a whole. Household and intra-household knowledge and resources are key influences in individuals’ abilities to take advantage of external livelihood opportunities or respond appropriately to threats. High education levels and social integration significantly improve the productivity of all members of the household and improve equity throughout society. Gender Equity Indices seek to provide the tools to demonstrate this feature of poverty.

Despite acknowledgement by institutions such as the World Bank that gender inequality is bad for economic growth, there are many difficulties in creating a comprehensive response. It is argued that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) fail to acknowledge gender inequality as a cross-cutting issue. Gender is mentioned in MDG3 and MDG5: MDG3 measures gender parity in education, the share of women in wage employment and the proportion women in national legislatures. MDG5 focuses on maternal mortality and on universal access to reproductive health. However, even these targets are significantly off-track.

Addressing gender inequality through social protection programmes designed to increase equity would be an effective way of reducing gender inequality. Researchers at the Overseas Development Institute argue for the need to develop the following in social protection in order to reduce gender inequality and increase growth:

- Community childcare to give women greater opportunities to seek employment;
- Support parents with the care costs (e.g. South African child/disability grants);
- Education stipends for girls (e.g. Bangladesh’s Girls Education Stipend scheme);
- Awareness-raising regarding gender-based violence, and other preventive measures, such as financial support for women and children escaping abusive environments (e.g. NGO pilot initiatives in Ghana);
- Inclusion of programme participants (women and men) in designing and evaluating social protection programmes;
- Gender-awareness and analysis training for programme staff;
- Collect and distribute information on coordinated care and service facilities (e.g. access to micro-credit and microentrepreneurial training for women); and
- Developing monitoring and evaluation systems that include sex-disaggregated data.

However, politics plays a central role in the interests, institutions and ideas that are needed to reshape social welfare and gender inequality in politics and society limits governments’ ability to act on economic incentives.

It is interesting to note that NGO’s tend to protect women against gender inequality and Structural violence. During war, the opposing side targets women, raping and even killing them. This could be because women are associated with children and killing them prohibits there being a next generation of the enemy.

Another opportunity to tackle gender inequality is presented by modern Information and communication technologies. In a carefully controlled study, it has been shown that women embrace digital technology more than men, disproving the stereotype of “technophobic women”. Given that digital information and communication technologies have the potential to provide access to employment, education, income, health services, participation, protection, and safety, among others, the natural affinity of women with these new communication tools provide women with a tangible



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bootstrapping opportunity to tackle social discrimination. In other words, if women are provided with modern information and communication technologies, these digital tools present to them an opportunity to fight longstanding inequalities in the workplace and at home.

## 9.2 Women in Ancient India

There are two schools of thought regarding the status of women in ancient India. One school has described women as “the equals of men”, while the other school holds that women were held not only in disrespect but even in positive hatred. Both schools refer to several passages from religious literature to prove their point. Apastamba had prescribed: “All must make a way for a woman when she is treading a path”. Since we behave in this way for those whom we respect, it indicates the high esteem in which women were held. Manu had said: “Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes, but where they are not unhappy, the family ever prospers.” At another place, Manu had said: “Where women are honoured, the gods are pleased but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields any reward”. Yagnavalkya had said: “Women are the embodiment of all divine virtues on earth. Soma has bestowed all his purity on them, Gandharva has given them sweetness of speech and fire has showered all his brilliance to make them most attractive.” Such lofty ideals about them have been repeated in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata also. In the Mahabharata, women were held not only as centres of domestic life but also as pivots of entire social organization. Man was required to bend his will before that of his wife and to serve her and to adore her.

This is one side of the picture. There is other side too. Women were held to be weak-minded and unworthy of being trusted. They were regarded as means of satisfying the physical desires of men, to serve them and to secure them progeny. At one place, it is said in the Mahabharata: “There is nothing that is more sinful than woman. Woman is the root of all evils. There is no creature more sinful than woman. Woman is a burning fire. She is the illusion that *Daitya Maya* created. She is the sharp edge of a razor. She is fire”. In the Ramayana, it is said: “The faces of women are like flowers; their words are like the drops of honey but their hearts are like sharp razor; the interior of them no one can know.” The way Manu had wanted men to consider women as things of possession and the way Drupadi was pawned by Yudhishtra in the game of dice, undoubtedly go to prove that in the early stages of civilization, women were regarded no better than chattels and slaves.

However, the quotations referred to from different religious scriptures cannot be relied upon for giving the true position of women in the society. They were ‘contextual’, that is, these statements were given in some context. If Bhishma had said: “Husband should regard his wife as an acquisition” or if Lord Rama had said: “I can give away all my royal inheritance and even my wife and all that I value to Bharat of my own free accord”, it was only in some context or in some situation. The real status of women could be judged by analyzing the social, economic, political and religious rights they enjoyed.

### **Women in the Vedic and the Post- Vedic Periods**

The social status of women in the Vedic and the post-Vedic periods can be ascertained from the extent of freedom they enjoyed or the restrictions imposed on them. Women never observed *pardah* in the Vedic and the Epic periods. They enjoyed freedom in selecting their mates. They could educate themselves. Widows were permitted to remarry. Divorce was, however, not permissible to them. But then it was not permissible to men either. In the household, they enjoyed complete freedom and were treated as *Ardhanganis* (better halves). In the Mahabharata, it was mentioned: “The sweet-speached wives are their husband’s friends on the occasion of joy; they are as their (husband’s) fathers on occasions of religious acts; and they are as mothers in hours of illness and woe”. In domestic life, women used to be supreme. Thus, in the social field, woman’s position was not one of complete disability but one dictated by justice and fairness.

In the economic field also, women enjoyed freedom. They did not serve and earn wages only because it was not necessary for them. Home was the place of production. Spinning and weaving of clothes was done at home. Women helped their husbands in agricultural pursuits also. Some women were engaged in the teaching work too.

In inheriting property, women's rights were limited. As a daughter, though a woman had no share in her father's property, yet each unmarried daughter was entitled to one-fourth share of patrimony received by her brothers. Mother's property, after her death, was equally divided among sons and unmarried daughters. Married daughters, however, received only a token of respect. *Stridhan* was inherited only by unmarried daughters. As a wife, a woman had no direct share in her husband's property. However, a forsaken wife was entitled to one-third of her husband's wealth. If a wife was poor, her husband was to provide for her maintenance. But if the property was divided during the lifetime of husband, his wife was to get an equal share with her sons. As a widow, a woman was supposed to lead an ascetic life and had no share in her husband's property. As a widowed mother, however, she had some rights. All this reveals that though there was a general prejudice against allowing women to hold property, yet some protection was given to them as daughters and wives.

The political status of women depends on the political situation and the existing political system in the country. Since the political system in ancient India was based on monarchy, there were no legislatures, political parties, diplomatic relations, and international conferences. In such a situation, the question of giving voting right or freedom for contesting elections and holding political posts to women did not arise. Women were not permitted entry in the *sabhas* (assemblies) because these places besides being used for taking political decisions, were also used for gambling, drinking and such other purposes. However, some examples, such as of Kekai's in the Ramayana period, point out that women also accompanied their husbands to war fronts. Megasthenes had referred to the bodyguard of armed women employed in the palace by the Emperor Chandragupta Maurya; Kautilya had also referred in *Arthashastra* to women soldiers armed with bows and arrows. Thus, when even the male population had no political rights of its own to exercise, how could women have any separate political status?

In the religious field, wife enjoyed full rights and regularly participated in religious ceremonies with her husband. In fact, the performance of religious ceremonies was considered invalid without wife joining her husband as his full partner. Women even participated actively in religious discourses. The participation of Brahmadhini Gargi Vachaknavi along with many male learned exponents and representatives of the different schools of philosophy in the conference – described as the conference of its kind in the world – convened by the philosopher king Janaka of Videha for codifying the scientific religious doctrines and practices, indicates the high religious status of women in ancient India. Jaimini's *Purva-mimansa* has been interpreted by Sahara Svami as dealing with the equal rights of men and women to the performance of the highest religious ceremonies. Hemadri refers to educated *kumaris* (unmarried girls) as *vidushis* who should be married to equally learned husbands called *manishis* (Radha Kumud Mukherjee, 1957 and 1990: 6).

It may, thus, be concluded that in Vedic India, the status of women was not low. They had ample rights in the social and the religious fields and limited rights in the economic and the political fields. They were not treated as inferior or subordinate but equal to men.

### Women in the Pauranic Period

The status of women was lowered in the Pauranic period. (The chronological order of religious scriptures of Hindu society is: Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, Griha-sutras, Dharmashastras, Smritis, Epics, and Puranas). In the social field, pre-puberty marriages came to be practised, widow remarriage was prohibited, husband was given the status of god for a woman, education was totally denied to women, custom of *sati* became increasingly prevalent, *purdah* (veil) system came into vogue, and practice of polygyny came to be tolerated. In the economic field, a woman was totally denied a share in her husband's property by maintaining that "a wife and a slave cannot own property." In the religious field, she was forbidden to offer sacrifices and prayers, practice penances, and undertake pilgrimages.

Prabhati Mukherjee has identified some reasons of low status of women in the Pauranic period by quoting Altekar, (1938) Winternitz (1920), Mitter, and Choudhry (1956). These reasons are: imposition of Brahmanical austerities on the entire society, rigid restrictions imposed by the caste system and the joint family system, lack of educational facilities for women, introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryan household, and foreign invasion (Alexander, etc.) of India.

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### Women in the Buddhist Period

The origin of Buddhism has been treated as reaction to Hinduism. Many unjustifiable social rigours, like introducing the practice of pre-puberty marriages and denying right to education, right to mate selection, right to participate in the religious discourses, etc., were imposed on women during the periods of Brahmanas and Puranas. In the Buddhist period, the status of women improved a little, though there was no tremendous change. In the religious field, women came to occupy a distinctly superior place. They had their own *sangha*, called *Bhikshuni Sangh*, which was guided by the same rules and regulations as those of the monks. The *sangh* opened to them avenues of cultural activities and social service and ample opportunities for public life. In the social field, they had an honoured place according to the traditions of Brahmanical religion. Their political and economic status, however, remained unchanged.

### Women in the Medieval Period

The first invasion of India by the Muslims took place in the eighth century – the period in which Sankracharya lived. The Hindu society was engaged in evolving, under the leadership of Sankracharya, a technique to face the expanding Buddhism. Sankracharya re-emphasized the supremacy of Vedas to counter the spread of Buddhism, and the Vedas had given a status of equality to women. India experienced a second Muslim invasion in the eleventh century when Mohmmad Ghazni conquered India. From this period onwards till the middle of the eighteenth century, when the British authority was established in the country, that is, during nearly 700 years, the breakdown of social institutions, the upsetting of traditional political structures, the vast migration of people, and the economic depression in the country – all these contributed to a general depression of social life, specially among women. The *purdah* system came to be followed to such an extent that rigorous seclusion of women became the rule. The facilities of education totally vanished. However, during the fifteenth century, the situation had undergone some change. Ramanujacharya organized the first Bhakti movement during this period, which introduced new trends in the social and the religious life of women in India. The *bhaktas* (saints) like Chaitanya, Nanak, Meera, Kabir, Ramdas, Tulsi and Turkaram, stood for the right of women to religious worship. Though their (*bhaktas*) total conception of women's status was not quite free from the then prevailing attitude to womanhood, yet this movement unlocked the gate of religious freedom to women. As a result of this freedom, they secured certain social freedom also. The *purdah* system was abolished. Attending *kathas* and *kirtans* (religious prayers) freed women from the circumscribed domestic life. The 'Grihastashram' emphasized upon in the Bhakti movement, did not permit saints to take to *sanyas* without the consent of wife. This implied giving an important right to women. This (Bhakti) movement had other effect also. Since the time of Manu, women were debarred from education. The saints encouraged women to read religious books and to educate themselves. Thus, the Bhakti movement gave a new life to women. However, since this movement did not bring any change in the economic structure, so women continued to hold low status in the society. Their status later on improved due to the effects of the British rule.

### Changes in the British Period Affecting Women's Status

The British remained the rulers of India in the eighteenth, the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. During the British rule, a number of changes were made in the economic and the social structures of our society. While progress in improving the quality of life of women during the British rule of 200 years appeared to have invisibility, yet some substantial progress was achieved in eliminating inequalities between men and women in education, employment, social rights, and so forth. We will refer here only to those aspects of change which affected the status of women. Six such important aspects were: (i) industrialization, (ii) spread of education, (iii) weakening of the caste system, (iv) social movements initiated by some enlightened leaders, (v) growth of women's organizations, and (vi) enactment of social legislation.

#### *Industrialization*

The economic changes during the British period were perhaps the most decisive. The growth of machine industries and the destruction of hand industries struck the deadliest blow to the means of livelihood both for women and men. The economic structure established by the British was not devised for the love of the

country or in the interests of the people. It was primarily meant to exploit Indian resources for the profit of the ruling class. But industrialization led to many changes like mobility of the people, growth of means of transport and communication, weakening of the *jajmani* system, availability of some new opportunities of work to people, and so forth. All these created new values and behaviour patterns.

### **Spread of Education**

The idea of imparting education to women emerged in the British period. Earlier, it was almost universally held that since women had not to earn their livelihood, there was no need of education for them. After the Bhakti movement, the Christian Missionaries took interest in the education of girls. A girl's school was started for the first time in Bombay in 1824. Lord Dalhousie also declared that no single change in the habit of the people is likely to lead to more important and beneficial consequences than the introduction of education for their family children. Since then, there has been a continuous progress in the extent of education among females. The literacy percentage among females in India increased from 0.6 per cent in 1901 to 2.93 per cent in 1931, 7.30 per cent in 1941, 12.95 per cent in 1961, 18.69 per cent in 1971, 24.88 per cent in 1981, and 39.42 per cent in 1991 (*Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics*, Ministry of Social Welfare, Government of India, 1981, p. 85 and *Census of India*, 1991). The number of literate women in the rural areas is much lower than in the urban areas. In 1981, as against 17.99 per cent in the rural areas, there were 47.65 per cent literate women in the urban areas. Further, in 1979-80, of the 78.9 million students studying in the primary classes (I to V standard), only 38.45 per cent were girls; of the 18.7 million students in the middle classes (VI to VIII standard), 32.90 per cent were girls; of the 7.51 million students studying in high school (IX and X standards), 29.24 per cent were girls; and of the 1.19 million students studying in XI and XII classes, 32.35 per cent were girls. This shows that broadly speaking, at the school level, the ratio of boys to girls is 3: 1. The percentage of girls undertaking higher education and those receiving professional education (medicine, engineering, law, teaching, etc.) is extremely low.



*Did u know?*

The Hunter Commission too emphasized on the need for female education in 1882. The Calcutta, Bombay and Madras universities did not permit admission to girls up to 1875. It was only after 1882 that girls were allowed to go for higher education.

While out of every 100 girls in schools, sixty-two study at the primary level, twenty-six study at the middle level, and twelve at the high school level, it may be said that though the number of girls studying at various levels is low, yet there has been a marked increase in the number of female students at every level from 1941 onwards.

### **Social Movements Initiated by Some Enlightened Leaders**

In the end of the nineteenth century, women in India suffered from disabilities like child marriage, practice of polygyny, sale of girls for marriage purposes, severe restrictions on widows, non-access to education, and restricting oneself to domestic and child-rearing functions. The Indian National Conference started in 1885 by Justice Ranade condemned these disabilities. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who played an important role in getting the *sati* system abolished, raised voice against child marriage and *pardah* system and fought for the right of inheritance for women. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar launched a movement for the right of widows to remarry and also pleaded for educating women. Maharishi Karve took up the problems of widow remarriage and education of women. He established the SNDT University in Maharashtra in 1916. Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, ruler of Baroda State, worked for preventing child marriages, polygyny and getting the right of education to women and the right of remarriage to widows. Swami Vivekanand, Swami Dayanand Saraswari, Annie Besant, and Mahatma Gandhi also took interest in the social and the political rights of women. Gandhiji was of the opinion that women should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. He was in favour of treating daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality. The advantage of the movements started by various social leaders was that they succeeded in arousing social consciousness for the liberation and equal rights to women.



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**Growth of Women's Organizations**

Some women's organizations like the Banga Mahila Samaj and the Ladies Theosophical Society functioned at local levels to promote modern ideals for women, but the pioneering work was done by those organizations which functioned on a national basis. Of these, five important national organizations were: Bharat Mahila Parishad (started in 1904 with the main aim to struggle for the emancipation of women), Bharat Stri Mahamandal (founded in 1910), Women's Indian Association (started in 1917 by Annie Besant), National Council of Women in India (founded in 1925 by Lady Aberden and Lady Tata), and All India Women's Conference (established in 1927 through the efforts of Margaret Cousins and others). Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust was started after the death of Kasturba Gandhi. These organizations took up issues like women's education, abolition of social evils (such as *purdah* and child marriage), Hindu law reform, moral and material progress of women, equality of rights and opportunities, and women's suffrage. It could be said that the Indian women's movement worked for two goals: (i) uplift of women, that is, reforming social practices so as to enable women to play a more important and constructive role in society, and (ii) equal rights for men and women, that is, extension of civil rights enjoyed by men in the political, economic, and familial spheres to women also. The former can be seen as a 'corporate feminist' goal while the latter can be viewed as 'liberal feminist' goal. The strategies used by these bodies were: making demands by organizing public meetings, presenting views to government officials, forming committees to investigate conditions, and holding conferences to mobilize women.

The factors that provided the required incentive to Indian women's movement were: effect of western education on the concept of complementary sex roles, leadership provided by educated elite women, interest of male social reformers in changing social practices sanctioned by religion, changing socio-religious attitudes and philosophies and decreasing social hostility and opposition of males to women's associations engaged in self-help activities, and benevolent attitude of political nationalist leaders toward the fledgling women's movement and their enthusiastic support to certain women campaigns. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), established by the Government of India in 1953, also promotes and strengthens voluntary efforts for the welfare of women. The Ministry of Welfare, Government of India, too gives grants to voluntary organizations for activities like construction/expansion of hostels for working women in cities. The state governments have also schemes of sanctioning money for running Mahila Mandals, Grih Kalyan Kendras and functional literacy centres, organizing camps for the training of rural women with public co-operation, and running of co-operative societies exclusively with women membership.

**Enactment of Social Legislation**

The enacted laws pertaining to women relate to: (a) marriage, (b) property, and (c) employment. The marriage laws concentrate on age of marriage, remarriage, dissolution of marriage, form of marriage, and freedom in mate selection. The important legislations enacted are: The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929; the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; and the Special Marriage Act, 1954. All these have been discussed in this book thoroughly in Chapter 6 on "Hindu Marriage". The property laws enacted are: Hindu Law of Inheritance, 1929; Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1939; and the Hindu Succession Act, 1956. The laws pertaining to employment are: the Factory Act, 1948; the Employees State Insurance Act, 1948; and the Maternity Benefit Acts. The 1948 Factory Act focuses on working hours, equal wages, load to be carried, sanitational facilities, creches, and so forth. The Employees State Insurance Act provides five benefits: sickness, maternity, disability, dependent, and medical.

Though these legislative measures have improved women's status to a large extent but (i) the legislation is extremely meagre and touches only the fringe of the problem, (ii) it is lopsided, that is, some laws have lower precision and accuracy than the others, (iii) the phrasing of some laws is so loose that they cannot be properly implemented, (iv) the machinery to implement legislation is costly, inefficient and complicated. It may, therefore, be said that legislation has not been effective to wipe out the hardships suffered by women. Theoretically, women might have been given more freedom but in practice they still suffer from inhuman dignities and unworthy treatment causing shame or loss of respect.

The analysis of the above factors points out the change in the conditions that kept women in situations of inferiority, dependence, and exploitation. Nevertheless, the change was not fully planned and was very slow.



## Women in the Post-Independence Period

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The low status of women in India up to late 1940s had mainly stemmed from illiteracy, economic dependence, religious prohibitions, caste restrictions, lack of female leadership, and apathetic and callous attitude of males. Everett Jana Matson (1981: 36-43) has identified five specific factors responsible for the low status of women in India and also for female seclusion in our culture. These are: Hindu religion, caste system, joint family system, Islamic rule, and British colonialism. The values of Hinduism held that males were superior to females and that males and females should perform different roles. Whereas women were supposed to concentrate on their roles as mother and householder, men were to be concerned with economics and politics. Hindu scriptures prescribed a dependent position for a woman throughout her lifetime. The caste system imposed many restrictions on the involvement of women in public affairs. On the one hand, it prescribed an early marriage for girls; and on the other, it prohibited widow remarriage and prescribed the practice of *sati*. The patrilineal joint family system curbed women's freedom and contributed to their low status in the family by assigning status based on age, sex and kinship. The status of women further deteriorated during the Muslim period. Under the socio-political impact of the Islamic rule, Hindus adopted the Muslim custom of female seclusion, that is, *pardah*, which implied a complementary division of labour by sex. Child marriages became very common to protect girls from the evil eyes of Muslim *nawabs* and *jagirdars*. Though the British rulers initially decided not to interfere with the social laws of Hindus but in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century, when some male social reformers talked of reforms for women and their efforts provided incentive to women's movements, the British Government agreed to abolish/change some social customs through legislative measures.

What is the status of women in India today? How do we analyze the change in their status? Five methods have been mainly used in assessing the status of women.

### *Historical Method*

It focuses on legacy in ancient society and its perpetuation in medieval and present periods. Social scientists draw important conclusions about women's status from the work of historians and philosophers like Altekar, Indra, Das, and Karve. However, some scholars believe that just citing examples from the religious scriptures or available records of the past does not constitute a historical analysis and is rarely very informative, and can often lead to erroneous conclusions and unfortunate exaggerations. Sociologists trained in the generally reductionist procedures of the hypothetico-deductive method and other forms of positivism find it difficult, if not impossible, to study women's status with historical materials.

### *Non-empirical Case Study Method*

In this method, the status of women is analyzed in terms of patriarchy as a social system, or relationship between sexual inequality and status of women. The low status of women is explained as the result of dominance of men over women which has existed historically and cross-culturally.

### *Empirical Method of Assessing Interpersonal Power*

This method studies male dominance over women but in isolation from the patriarchal system of which it is a part. It holds that the problem (of low status/exploitation/denial of rights) lies in the dominance of women and the answer lies in the struggle against it. This body of research has focused not on structured inequality on the societal level but on inequality and the balance of power within the family. High status of women in this method is associated with egalitarian decision-making and low status with non-egalitarian decision-making. The empirical study includes in-depth interviews with women of different communities, classes and categories who have experienced different behaviour from their husbands and in-laws. While this empirical research method provides valuable evidence on the relationship between husband dominance and women's status, it is too narrowly focused and does not give real picture of general status of women in the society. The patriarchal, social, and cultural context within which the family is enmeshed and marital power relations are played out is overlooked.

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***Feminist Quantitative Research Method***

In this empirical method, status of women is compared with the status of men in key dimensions. According to Kersti Yllo (1980), such dimensions could be economic, educational, political and legal (see also, Ahuja Ram, 1992: 164-68). The individual items are combined into indexes for each of the four dimensions and for the total index. These indexes provide rank order from 'most' to 'least' egalitarian.

***Empirical Quantitative and Qualitative Questionnaire Method***

In this method, questions are asked from the respondents on selected items pertaining to behaviour, privileges enjoyed, and interpersonal relations in and outside the family. The quantitative data are used for qualitative analysis. This approach does not preclude the exploration of lancets hypotheses and theories central to feminist analysis.

Besides the above methods, three ideological propositions on women's rights are also used in assessing women's present status. These are: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and radical feminism. The *liberal feminism* believes in gender equality, that is, equal rights to men and women. It rejects subordination of one sex by the other, or treating women as sex objects instead of as human beings. However, this ideology does not challenge the division of labour on sex basis. It holds that woman is best suited for family roles and man for outside roles. *Marxist feminism* marks a departure from an earlier ideology which rejected feminism as bourgeoisie. Marx's definition of the proletariat inevitably marginalizes an interest in women. Engles's approach in explaining women's oppression as a world-historical effect of property has also been considerably refined today. Engles held that female subordination is the result of emergence of private property and ownership of means of production. Unlike men, women's work has a 'use' value but not 'exchange' value. Therefore, men hold more power than women, or the oppression of women is due to the unpaid homework. The ideology of *radical feminism* though believes in sexual equality but it rejects traditional division of labour. It holds that the gender roles are not only the result of biological factors but also the product of culture. It believes in free sex and collective childcare. Thus, when in the nineteenth century, the Marxists gave a deterministic orientation to the discussion of women's question (that women's oppression is specific to a capitalist mode of production), now they give a more humanistic explanation. Besides, *current feminism* (Marxist or radical) emerged out of the New Left and the student movements of the 1960s.

In the background of these approaches and ideologies, it may be maintained that the status of women in India has changed a lot from early 1950s onwards. Both structural and cultural changes have not only provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and political participation, but have also reduced the exploitation of women, and oriented women to develop their own organizations which take keen interest in their problems. Besides, the need for linkages between research, national policy, and programmes oriented to women has come to be increasingly realized. Several commissions have been appointed by the central and the state governments to study the causes of low status of women and to protect their rights in various fields. Two such important commissions were appointed by the Central Government in 1971 and 1992. The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up on January 31, 1992 to look into women-related issues, to probe into the status of women, to study various legislations and point out loopholes and gaps, and to look into the causes of discrimination and violence against women and analyze possible remedies.

This author's contention is that Indian woman today is still not economically emancipated from man. In social, psychological and moral dimensions also, her situation is not identical with that of man. The way she carries on her job, profession, and domestic work, and her devotion to all these depends on the context supplied by the total pattern of her life. When she begins her adult life, she does not have behind her the same past as has a man. She is evaluated by the society with a different perspective. A large majority of women fail to achieve the liberation since they do not escape from the traditional feminine world. They get neither from society nor from their husbands the assistance needed to become in concrete fact the equals of men. No wonder, they are still the victims of male victimizers.

The denial of rights to women may be related to individual, economic, and demographic factors. The *individual* factors refer to the personality characteristics of those males who possess low intellectual ability (IQ); who suffer from immaturity, depression and frustrations; who are alcoholics; or who have unrealistically high expectations from women and expect them to remain docile and passive. As regards the *economic* factors, the non-earning women are denied rights more than the earning women; the low and middle-income families deny rights to women more than the upper income families; and among the earning women, those engaged in non-professional or low status jobs enjoy less rights than those engaged in professions or high status jobs. Lastly, as regards the *demographic* factors, women in the upper castes are denied less rights than women in the intermediate or the lower castes; the older males deny rights to women more than the younger males; and rights denied by women to women are more than the rights denied by men to women.

This helps us in identifying males who deny rights to women. These men are those who have depressions, inferiority complex and low esteem; lack-resources, that is, skills and talents; are sociopathic or psychopaths, that is, have personality disorders; have possessive, suspicious and domineering nature; were victims of violence in their own childhood; and face stressful situations in their families.

Further, women who are denied rights most may be identified as those who have feelings of helplessness, suffer from inferiority complex, have poor self-image, lack social maturity, and are economically dependent.

We may also identify six types of denials of rights: money-oriented, pleasure-oriented, power-oriented, victim-precipitated, denier's pathology-resulted, and stressful family situations-resulted.

### 9.3 Changing Status of Woman

The disadvantaged situation of women in the labour market is a consequence of their illiteracy, lack of training and skill, and low position in the social system, including their total exclusion from the structures of decision-making and power.

#### The Working Women

There has been a remarkable increase in the number of women getting out of the four-walls of the household and becoming workers in both cities and villages, according to the 1991 Report of the Census Commissioner. According to the 1971 Census figures, only 13.0 per cent of Indian women were regarded as workers in the total country's workforce. This percentage rose to 25.89 in 1981 and 28.57 in 1991 (*The Hindustan Times*, April 6, 1993) About 80.0 per cent of the working women are indirectly engaged in agriculture. Only 12.0 per cent of the total employees in central and state administrative services and public sector undertakings are women. The Table 9.1 and Table 9.2 below show the total female population and as 'unpaid' workers. In the field of (paid) agriculture labour, the number of women increased from 20.76 million in 1981 28.27 million in 1991.

Table 9.1  
Female Population and Female Workers in India

Category	Female population (in millions)				Female workers main and marginal (in millions)			Work participation rate or female workers		
	1961	1971	1981	1991	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
<b>Total</b>	206.2	255.0	318.2	406.5	57.5	36.2	66.3	5.75	3.62	6.63
<b>Rural</b>	170.6	205.6	245.1	304.0	53.6	32.7	58.5	5.36	3.27	5.85
<b>Urban</b>	35.6	49.4	73.1	102.5	3.9	3.5	7.8	0.39	0.35	0.78

Source: *Social Welfare Statistics, 1981, pp. 103-105.*

Notes

The number of women employed in India in 1979 in factories was 5.14 lakh, in mines 0.8 lakh, and in plantations 4.18 lakh.

**Table 9.2**  
**Break-up of Percentage of Female Workers**

Category	1961	1971	1981
Cultivators	15.45	3.61	4.77
Agricultural labourers	6.87	6.18	6.58
Other workers	5.61	2.34	3.09
Total female workers	27.93	12.13	14.44

Of the total women in the workforce in India, out of every 100 employed women, 52.59 are illiterate, 28.56 are educated up to primary and middle school, 13.78 are educated upto secondary school, and 5.07 are graduates and above (*Ibid*: 124). In the urban areas, out of every 100 employed women, 25.83 are illiterate, 35.49 are educated up to primary and middle school, 25.71 are educated up to secondary school, and 12.97 are graduates and above. In the rural areas, out of every 100 employed women, 88.11 are illiterate, 10.68 are educated up to primary and middle school, and 1.21 are educated above middle school (*Ibid*: 124).

**Work Motivations**

Why do women seek employment? The motivation to work among women is different from that of men. Though the main reason appears to be ‘monetary need’ but it will be wrong to say that all women pursue a job only with this motive. On the basis of a study of 728 working women, the important factors in seeking jobs are pointed out as: insufficient wages of husband, death of husband, illness of husband, non-support by husband, desertion by husband, and preference for work outside the home. Broadly speaking, 89.0 per cent of the women were found to be working due to economic necessity. A study of 225 working women in Jaipur (Rajasthan) in 1989 by Deepa Mathur (1992: 23) identified six motivational factors in women’s employment: economic necessity or augmenting meagre family income (22.7%), security against future contingencies (20.0%), improvement of living standard (20.4%), escape from boredom or social affiliation (17.3%), personal esteem (12.4%), and self-fulfilment (7.2%). Thus, 63.0 per cent women worked for financial reasons and 37.0 per cent for non-financial reasons. When the women were asked that given an option to choose all over again, would they prefer being full-time housewives or full-time employees with householder’s role, 52.0 per cent preferred only a domestic role and 48.0 per cent favoured a combination of work and marriage (*Ibid*: 24). Thus, a little more than half of the women were found eager to work and a little less than half were found reluctant to work. The measurement of the motivational level pointed out that 47.6 per cent women had a high motivational level (that is, desire for work was sustained and kept up by a composite of several factors), 35.1 per cent had a moderate motivational level, and 17.3 per cent had a low motivational level. The high motivational level was found related to high level of education, higher job satisfaction, and young age. In 29.0 per cent cases, the source of motivation was family of orientation (parents, siblings), in 23.0 per cent cases family of procreation (husband, in-laws), in 9.0 per cent cases friends and teachers, and in 39.0 per cent cases self-inspiration.

Like factors which increase the propensity of motivation to work, there are some factors which mitigate this propensity. The de-motivating factors in Deepa Mathur’s study (*Ibid*: 36) were found to be: non-availability of suitable jobs (49%), lack of skill (20%), lack of desire to work (18%), discouragement from husband/inlaws (8%), and incompatibility with husband’s job requirement (5%).

**Dual Role Satisfaction**

How many women remain satisfied with the dual roles? If an earning woman attempts and succeeds in merging her working role with the general roles of mother and wife, she will be considered as a woman who is satisfied with her dual roles. The ‘high’ satisfaction implies being happy with the performance of both the worker’s and home-maker’s roles; ‘moderate’ satisfaction implies marginal

imbalance in the equilibrium of the two roles (one coming in the way of other); and 'low' satisfaction implies being dissatisfied with one or both roles to a very large extent. In Deepa Mathur's study, 53 per cent women were found to be highly satisfied (with their dual roles), 18 per cent moderately satisfied, and 29 per cent dissatisfied.

This satisfaction/dissatisfaction with dual roles affects working woman's self-image. 'High' self-image means that woman feels that her work has improved her individuality, while 'low' self-image means that woman feels that her job did not have a positive effect on her personality.

Low self-image and dual role problems create the sociological problem of role-conflict for the working women, which in turn affects the family relations, child-care, and role performance with active and passive involvement. Women with submissive disposition have more problems with dual roles than those having a dominant personality. Deepa Mathur in her study (*Ibid*: 87-88) found 21.8 per cent women having high degree of role-conflict, 44.4 per cent having low degree and 33.8 per cent having no problem of role-conflict. Significant or moderate or weak relationship was found between role-conflict and variables like motivational level of working, husband's attitude towards wife's employment, interpersonal relations at work-place, and woman's personality type. The relationship of role-conflict with motivational level and husband's attitude is significant, with interpersonal relations at work-place is *weak*, with personality type (home-oriented, career-oriented, and home-cum-career-oriented) is significant, and with presence of children is moderate.

Ramu (1989) is of the opinion that conflict between the new economic and the traditional domestic roles results in the compartmentalization of activities of women, at least in the initial phases of their marital lives. However, this compartmentalization is short-lived, because the competing demands of the occupational and domestic worlds will make it impossible for many women to address such demand equitably. Sooner or later, many of these women learn either to scale down their occupational aspirations or to curtail their obligations.

### Role Adjustment

The working women have to 'adjust' themselves in home as well as working-place. Adjustment is "smooth switch-over from one status to other status, perceiving roles as perceived by others, and performing multiple roles with efficiency and satisfaction." In simple terms, role adjustment depends upon role demands (by the society) and role performance (by the individual).

A working woman has to face innumerable problems. The home-life has to be adjusted with the office routine. The house-work has to be organized on lines different from the traditional ones. According to Lazarns (1961), four main indicators of adjustment are: skilled and intellectual performance of roles, extent of psychological comfort, absence of symptoms of tensions, and social acceptability of behaviour.

The adjustment is measured on a unidimensional continuum. An individual's position can be located on it ranging from the highest point to the lowest point on the continuum. Low adjustment is differentiated from maladjustment as the two are qualitatively different from each other. Maladjustment involves pathological responses but low adjustment indicates incomplete involvement in situations.

The 'home adjustment' and 'job adjustment' include different criteria of evaluation. In the case of working women, generally it is found that the degree of high adjustment is higher in case of job adjustment as compared to home adjustment.

Deepa Mathur's research (*Ibid*: 107) revealed that out of 225 working women studied, 38 per cent had high home adjustment, 43 per cent moderate home adjustment, and 19 per cent low home adjustment. As regards the level of job adjustment, 44 per cent showed high, 30 per cent moderate, and 26 per cent low adjustment. The level of job adjustment was found to be varying with the nature of job, length of service, access to power, and future plans. Against this, the level of home adjustment depends upon the structure of family, size of family, husband's and in-law's co-operation and self-esteem. Taking the two situations (home-life and work) together, it may be stated that the working women generally succeed in developing strategies that allow them to pursue their occupational aspirations while simultaneously living up to their domestic responsibilities. Though the working women spend



Notes

their income mostly on raising the living standards, though they are accused of becoming proud, self-centered, arrogant and negligent, yet they manage to break through the shell of narrow domestic existence and participate in the larger life of the nation and even humanity.

### Rights of Women

In a society where about half of the total population and three-fifths of the females are illiterate (1991 Census), orthodox and tradition-bound beliefs and practices cannot be stuffed overnight. Nor it is easy to create a strong public opinion against these practices. Legislation, of course, does make some impact but it can only be introduced very cautiously and in stages. What are the legislations on the statute book at present pertaining to women's rights? To what extent have these social laws revolutionized the Hindu society? To what extent have they tried to bring about social change? We will briefly discuss the rights assured to women through these laws.

The important rights assured by the Constitution of India to women, like men, are:

1. Right to equality, that is, equality of opportunity, equality before law, equal protection of the laws, not discriminating against any person on grounds of sex, and not discriminating against in matters of public employment on the gender grounds.
2. Right to freedom, that is, freedom of speech, expression, residence; occupation, and mobility.
3. Right against exploitation, that is, against forced labour (*begar*).
4. Right to freedom of religion, that is, professing, practicing and propagating religion freely.
5. Right to property, that is, acquiring, holding and selling property.
6. Cultural and educational rights, that is, conserving one's culture and seeking admission to educational institutions.
7. Right to constitutional remedies, that is, approaching courts for enforcing fundamental rights.

Besides assuring these fundamental rights, the state has also been empowered to enact special laws for protecting the interests of and giving preferential treatment to females (and weaker sections). On this ground, the state has been taking legislative measures from time to time for performing its obligations of bringing in a social order in which justice prevails.

During the last three to four decades, a number of laws have been enacted/amended to ensure equality of status and opportunity for women. These laws may be examined at three levels: social, economic, and political.

### Social Laws

The major issues relevant to women and relating to social laws are: marriage, adoption, guardianship, and abortion. The important issues pertaining to marriage are: (a) mate selection, (b) age at marriage, (c) polygamy, (d) invalid marriage, (e) defective or void marriage, (f) divorce, (g) restitution of conjugal rights, (h) alimony and maintenance, (i) custody of child, (j) dowry, and (k) remarriage. The important laws, already referred to in earlier pages, pertaining to these issues are: the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955; the Special Marriage Act, 1954; and the Widow Remarriage Act, 1856.

The law pertaining to the adoption of children was passed in 1956, called the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act. Not only a married woman but an unmarried woman, a widow, and a divorcee are also given the right to adopt a child. Only such children are permitted to be adopted who are unmarried and less than fifteen years of age.

Abortion was legally treated as a criminal offence till 1970. In 1971, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed which legally permitted both pregnant woman and abortionist to cause miscarriage. The legislation, which came into force in April 1972, permits the termination of pregnancy by a registered doctor if it does not exceed twelve weeks. The pregnancy is to be terminated if it involves risk to the life of the pregnant woman, grave injury to her physical/mental health, and the risk that if the child is born, he would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities so as to be seriously handicapped. The termination of pregnancy is also permitted where it is caused by rape or failure of con-traceptive device.

## Economic Laws

## Notes

The issues pertaining to economic laws include: right to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits, and job security. The right to property of a woman refers to her right as a daughter, as a wife, as a widow, and as a mother. According to the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, not only a daughter is given a right in her father's property equal to her brothers, but a widow also gets a share in her deceased husband's property equal to her sons and daughters. The legislation has also removed the distinction between *stridhan* and non-*stridhan*.

As regards the equal wages, the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 does not permit wage discrimination between male and female workers. The legislation prescribes penalties for those employers who disobey the rules.

The working conditions during employment are governed by the Factory Act, 1948. Besides including provisions dealing with working hours, weekly rest, standards of cleanliness, ventilation, temperature, fencing of machinery, first-aid facilities, and rest rooms, the legislation provides for the establishing of creches for children (if the factory employs thirty or more women), separate toilets for females and lays down a maximum work of nine hours in a day for women and no employment of women between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m.

## Political Rights

The two important rights in the political field sanctioned to women by the Indian Constitution are: female enfranchisement and eligibility for the legislature. The demand for women's suffrage was first made in 1917 but was rejected by the Southborough Franchise Committee in 1918. In 1919, the government permitted the states to enact their own laws for granting franchise to women. Such laws were enacted by Rajkot in 1923, Travancore and Cochin in 1924, Madras and Uttar Pradesh in 1925, Punjab and Assam in 1926, and Bihar and Orissa in 1929 (Jane Matson, 1971: 108-110). The Government of India Act, 1935 granted female enfranchisement on the basis of educational qualifications. Subsequently, fifty-six women entered the legislatures in the 1937 elections. After the independence, the number of women voters and women's representatives in assemblies and parliament has increased sufficiently.

## Consciousness of Rights

Though women in India have more rights than women of other countries, but are our women conscious of all these rights? Do they actually enjoy these rights? This author conducted a study a few years ago in eight villages of a district in Rajasthan among 753 women belonging to 18-50 years age-group. The main object of the study was to assess the degree of awareness and measure the level of satisfaction among women of rights sanctioned by the Constitution and the various laws (see Ahuja, 1992). The conceptual model conceived for this research ascertained that the level of awareness of rights by a woman in a specific domain (economic, social, political or religious) is dependent on four things: her individual background (educational level, aspiration level, and personal needs), her social environment (including expectations of kins, husband's values and family members' perceptions), her subjective perception (of her status and roles), and her economic base (that is, level of class-membership). Our analysis pointed out the following facts pertaining to the awareness of varied types of rights and the level of satisfaction with the enjoyment of rights.

## Consciousness of Social Rights

- Awareness of the marriage laws among women is very low. Only about one-tenth women in our survey were aware of the right to choose their own life-partners, about one-fiftieth were aware of the correct legal age for marriage, little less than one-fifth were aware of the right to divorce, little less than one-tenth were aware of legal stipulation of getting alimony after divorce, less than one-fifth were aware of the legal right of widows to remarry, and little less than one-fifth were aware of the dowry law. Taking all the aspects together, it could be said that only about one-tenth women have some awareness of the marriage laws.
- Women play a marginal role in decision-making in the family. Consultation with wife by husband exists only in insignificant areas of domestic life.

Notes

- Conjugal relationship has not achieved any significant importance in husband-wife relationship.
- Women do not find their position in family frustrating; rather they find their life experience satisfying.
- About two-thirds women are satisfied with their marriage and family life.
- Level of satisfaction with housework varies inversely with age, education and income. Poor, illiterate and less educated women as also the middle-aged women are more satisfied with house-work than rich, educated and young women.
- Women are least liberated from the traditional values and age strongly oriented to the existing norms.

**Consciousness of Economic Rights**

- Though only a small number of women (about one-fourth) are aware of the right of a share in father's property, a large number (about four-fifths) are aware of the right of a share in husband's property.
- A small number of women (about one-third) inherit husband's property and a negligible number of them (0.5 per cent) get a share of the father's property.
- Only about one-tenth women are working and earning in villages and are economically independent.
- The working women evaluate the roles of housework and homemaker as positively as the non-working women despite the burden which the role of wage-earning imposes on them.
- About nine out of every ten working women are dissatisfied with their wage-earning work. This dissatisfaction, however, is caused by the nature of work they do and the wages they get rather than by the idea of the work itself.
- Women who contribute to family economy are not free to spend their earnings according to their own choice.

**Consciousness of Political Rights**

- A very small number of women (less than one-fifth) have political awareness.
- Of the women having franchise, about three-fourths exercise it. Interestingly enough, a sense of an outing rather than a real interest in politics motivates women to vote.
- Voting behaviour of women is neither linked with political mobilization nor with political socialization but with their husbands' political beliefs and attitudes.
- The liberal theory of elections emphasizing the rational choice or preference of the candidate or the party for which an individual voter votes is not valid in describing the voting behaviour of women.
- Women generally are not the active members of any political party; only a few women support some party.

From the above findings, the conclusion seems to be that the awareness of rights does not *ipso facto* raises women's status, nor unawareness lowers their feeling of satisfaction (with their status). The main barriers in the awareness of rights are: illiteracy, excessive involvement in domestic chores, household constraints (that is, attitudes of husband and in-laws), and economic dependence on males.

**Plan of Action**

If males deny due rights to women in the family either because it is culturally approved, or because the women themselves tolerate it and do not revolt, or because no punishment is given to the violators of the social laws, or because the advantages of denying rights outweigh the costs, how do we break this cycle of injustice on the part of males? How do we protect the interests of women? What programmes and policies will make males liberal and just? The remedies appear to be legal, social and economic.

## Legal Remedies

## Notes

Justice to women has to be recognized publicly so that human service professionals could respond with proper action. In the first decade after independence, gender equality was recognized as a significant problem and a greater amount of effort went into assuring that exploitation of women would be identified and responded to with proper measures. Between 1952 and 1962, several laws were designed to bring about equality to women. Prior to the enactment of these laws, professionals and politicians were extremely reluctant to identify the necessary legal measures needed to boost equality of the sexes. But after India became a republic, our new power-holders came to believe that woman's equality was no longer a 'family matter' but a social problem. Several state laws were, therefore, drafted with the aim to treat women on par with men. But as expected, social laws have not been fully implemented. The courts continue to be traditional in perspective while interpreting social laws. The criminal justice system has to approach woman's exploitation from a sociological perspective, instead of remaining bogged down to legal technicalities. Some laws have also to be amended so that the police need not wait for surgical sutures for arresting a man for 'hurting' a woman. Many police officials point out numerous instances where women fail to press charges and actually drop charges at the trial. Consequently, the police and the prosecutors cannot advise women victims for taking legal action against their brothers who refuse to give them a share in paternal property or against their fathers who marry them against their wishes, or against husbands who compel them to go for abortion. Women's co-operation with the law is extremely necessary. Organized women's groups or voluntary organizations have to help women seeking protection through legal measures.

## Social Remedies

Social remedies include women welfare services, encouraging the establishment of voluntary organizations, and legal literacy of women through mass media. The voluntary organizations have to identify women in need of services. The help of the neighbours has to be sought in reporting cases of 'abused' women to human service agencies. The public education and awareness programmes will help women in taking injustice to them seriously and seeking the help of social workers and women's organizations in getting their due rights. The optimal situation for women welfare agencies is to be able to respond to women's problems of injustice quickly, effectively, and in a manner that treats the causes of injustice and abuse, not just the symptoms. The males have also to be made to renege their new roles in the changed times and understand the necessity of their own contribution to family life and housework.

## Economic Remedies

Education and vocational training for women will enable them to seek jobs and become economically independent. The independence will reduce their stress, bring fundamental changes in their values and beliefs and make them bold enough to demand and stand-up for their rights.

Women need resources to help them to shape better conditions of life for themselves and their families. Following Elise Boulding (1977: 132), ten resources may be suggested for women in our society: technological aids which will be labour-saving devices and will lighten women's burden of heaviest daily tasks, basic community facilities, encouraging girls to join schools and get education and training, non-formal education, specialists who may train women, opportunities for paraprofessional training, credit facilities, legal protection of rights, voluntary organizations, and programmes of placing women in important positions at various levels.

It may be concluded that making women aware of their rights in the rural areas requires a different type of planning and approach than making women aware of rights in the urban areas. At the same time, we have to concede that legislative sanctions by themselves cannot raise the status of women. This effort has to be coupled with other efforts suggested earlier. It is only this conjunctive approach that can get justice to women in our society.

## **9.4 Women's Quest for Equality**

For young women today who see role models like Condoleezza Rice serving as the newly appointed Secretary of State to President Bush, and New York Senator Hilary Rodham Clinton being touted as a possible 2008 presidential candidate, it's hard to imagine a time in America when women could not vote, or own property, or go to work at a job of their choosing. But, it wasn't that long ago.

This March, as we celebrate National Women's History Month, we look back at some of the great women leaders of our past, like Susan B. Anthony, a key proponent in earning women the right to vote, and Alice Paul, another **suffragist** who was born in Mount Laurel.

In the face of considerable opposition, these activists organized, picketed, marched—even chained themselves to the White House fence—to obtain the liberties that American Women so freely enjoy today.

While much has been gained, women's rights proponents agree that more is yet to be done, such as securing equal pay for equal work, and obtaining an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Only with continued diligence, these activists say, can women protect the freedoms they worked so hard to obtain and advance the women's rights movement forward for generations to come.

### **The vote—a 'towering milestone'**

While the women's rights effort has achieved numerous victories over the years, the vote remains a "towering milestone," says Lucienne Beard, program director at the Alice Paul Institute in Mount Laurel.

More than 100 years in the making, the women's **suffrage** movement began as far back as the early 1800s, when women began receiving more education, getting more involved in politics, and questioning why they weren't allowed to vote.

America saw "one of the first public appeals for woman suffrage" in 1848, when two women, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, held a women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. There, male and female participants signed a Declaration of Sentiments, which called for the end of discrimination against women not only with regard to voting, but in all aspects of society.

### **National suffrage groups form**

In 1869, Congress passed the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guaranteed all men of different race and color the right to vote but did not secure voting rights specifically for women. That same year suffragists formed two national organizations—the National Woman Suffrage Association and the American Woman Suffrage Association.

Stanton, who had headed the Seneca Falls Convention, and Susan B. Anthony led the National Woman Suffrage Association. In 1872, Anthony gained widespread attention after she was arrested and fined for leading a group of women to vote illegally in a presidential election in Rochester, New York.

The American Woman Suffrage Association was headed by Lucy Stone and her husband, Henry Blackwell, and took a more conservative approach, seeking to obtain women's voting rights on a state-by-state basis. In 1890, the two organizations merged to become the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

### **New generation of leaders emerge**

While the struggle for suffrage waged on, some of its earliest proponents, like Stanton and Anthony, did not live to realize their dreams. During the early 1900s, a new generation of leaders began to emerge, engaging middle-class women, working-class women, young people and radicals alike in the battle for the vote. Some of these leaders undertook widespread lobbying efforts, while others, like Alice Paul, organized active protests, like marches and picketing.

In 1920, the efforts of these activists and their predecessors finally paid off. It was then that the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, providing that "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."



## Women's suffrage spreads

Notes

Similar suffrage movements were also taking place in western countries, such as New Zealand, which was the first nation to grant women full voting rights in 1893; Sweden, which granted full women's suffrage in 1921, and Britain, which gave women voting rights in 1928.

Other countries, such as China, France, India, Italy and Japan, did not grant women suffrage until the mid 1900s. By 1990, women were allowed to vote in almost all democratic nations.

## Women lead voting population

If leaders like Anthony and Stanton were alive today, they would surely celebrate the large number of women who now visit the polls for political elections.

According to a report by the Rutgers' Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), titled *The Gender Gap and the 2004 Women's Vote, Setting the Record Straight*, women vote in higher numbers than men and have done so in every national election since 1964. The report noted that in 2000, 7.8 million more women than men voted. In 2004, according to a CNN exit poll, women comprised 54 percent of the voters in the presidential election, compared to 46 percent male voters.

## Other victories

While suffrage remains a vital milestone in the women's rights movement, it is one of many accomplishments women celebrate in America this March.

Here in New Jersey, for example, Bergen County attorney Madeline Marzano-Lesnevich notes that a state statute added to the books in the early 1970s played a significant role in the women's rights movement by, in effect, granting women more economic rights when a marriage is ended.

In contrast with years prior, this statute, she notes, requires the courts to consider a variety of factors, such as the care and education of children, and the extent to which a spouse has deferred achieving career goals, in distributing property and awarding support.

The statute gave women economic rights within a marriage that they did not have previously, notes Marzano-Lesnevich. Knowing this, she says, empowered women and provided them with more freedom to leave an unhappy or abusive marriage.

With more women joining the workforce, in 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which promised equitable wages for the same work, regardless of the race, color, religion, national origin or sex of the worker, according to a timeline sponsored by the National Women's History Project. Also, in 1964 according to the NWHHP timeline, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was passed, prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sex of the worker.

## More to do

While it may seem tempting to sit back and enjoy the successes already achieved, women's rights proponents like Beard of the Alice Paul Institute contend there is still more to be done.

As an example, Beard points to the issue of equal pay, and notes that in spite of legislation like the Equal Pay Act, women are still not earning the same money as men. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, women, on average, who work full-time earn only about 75 cents for every dollar that a man earns and the gap is even larger for women of color.

Also, Beard and others continue to advocate for an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution, an idea that

Paul first introduced in 1923 and continued, without success, to actively lobby for until her death in 1977. While a number of state constitutions, including the New Jersey Constitution, contain provisions prohibiting discrimination based on gender, no such amendment exists at the federal level, Beard says.

Currently, the ERA Amendment has been ratified in 35 states, which is three states short for it to become an official amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 1982, Congress voted to eliminate the deadline for state ratification of the amendment. Essentially, this means that if and when any three of the 15 states that have not ratified the ERA Amendment were to do so, it could become the 28th

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amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The 15 states in which the ERA Amendment has not been ratified are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia.

Not only would a federal ERA help to secure the status that women have worked so hard to achieve, ERA proponents argue, but it would also offer legal precedent in courts of law where discrimination cases are being considered.

### **9.5 Violence against Women**

Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. Usually, domestic aggression towards women and girls, due to various reasons remain hidden.

Cultural and social factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of violent behaviour. With different processes of socialisation that men and women undergo, men take up stereotyped gender roles of domination and control, whereas women take up that of submission, dependence and respect for authority. A female child grows up with a constant sense of being weak and in need of protection, whether physical social or economic. This helplessness has led to her exploitation at almost every stage of life.

The family socialises its members to accept hierarchical relations expressed in unequal division of labour between the sexes and power over the allocation of resources. The family and its operational unit is where the child is exposed to gender differences since birth, and in recent times even before birth, in the form of sex-determination tests leading to foeticide and female infanticide. The home, which is supposed to be the most secure place, is where women are most exposed to violence.

Violence against women has been clearly defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, first recognised gender-based violence as a human rights violation in 1993. In the same year, *United Nations* declaration, 1993, defined *violence against women* as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".

Radhika Coomaraswamy identifies different kinds of violence against women, in the United Nation's special report, 1995, on *Violence against Women*;

1. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.
2. Physical sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.
3. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the state, wherever it occurs.

This definition added 'violence perpetrated or condoned by the State', to the definition by United Nations in 1993.

Coomaraswamy (1992) points out that women are vulnerable to various forms of violent treatment for several reasons, all based on gender.

1. Because of being female, a woman is subject to rape, female circumcision/genital mutilation, female infanticide and sex related crimes. This reason relates to society's construction of female sexuality and its role in social hierarchy.

2. Because of her relationship to a man, a woman is vulnerable to domestic violence, dowry murder, *sati*. This reason relates to society's concept of a woman as a property and dependent of the male protector, father, husband, son, etc.
3. Because of the social group to which she belongs, in times of war, riots. Or ethnic, caste, or class violence, a woman may be raped and brutalised as a means of humiliating the community to which she belongs. This also relates to male perception of female sexuality and women as the property of men.

Combining these types of abuse with the concept of hierarchical gender relations, a useful way to view gender violence is by identifying where the violence towards women occurs. Essentially, violence happens in three contexts - the family, the community and the state and at each point key social institutions fulfil critical and interactive functions in defining legitimating and maintaining the violence.

1. The family socialises its members to accept hierarchical relations expressed in unequal division of labour between the sexes and power over the allocation of resources.
2. The community (i.e., social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions) provides the mechanisms for perpetuating male control over women's sexuality, mobility and labour.
3. The state legitimises the proprietary rights of men over women, providing a legal basis to the family and the community to perpetuate these relations. The state does this through the enactment of discriminatory application of the law.

Margaret Schuler has divided gender violence into four major categories;

1. Overt physical abuse (battering sexual assault, at home and in the work place)
2. Psychological abuse (confinement, forced marriage)
3. Deprivation of resources for physical and psychological well being (health/nutrition, education, means of livelihood)
4. Commodification of women (trafficking, prostitution)

Adriana Gomez has also talked about two basic forms of violence, that is; structural and direct. Structural violence arises from the dominant political, economic and social systems, in so far as they block access to the means of survival for large number of people; for example, economic models based on the super-exploitation of thousands for the benefit of a few, extreme poverty in opposition to ostentatious wealth, and repression and discrimination against those who diverge from given norms.

Structural violence according to her is the basis of direct violence, because it influences the socialisation which causes individuals to accept or inflict suffering, according to the social function they fulfil. Open or direct violence is exercised through aggression, arms or physical force. (Larrain and Rodrigue, 1993)

The Fourth Conference of Women, 1995 has defined violence against women as a physical act of aggression of one individual or group against another or others. *Violence against women* is any act of gender-based violence which result in, physical, sexual or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts. (Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995 Country Report).

*Violence* is an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person (Gelles and Straus, 1979). *Gender Violence* is defined as "any act involving use of force or coercion with an intent of perpetuating promoting hierarchical gender relations". (APWLD, 1990, Schuler, 1992)

Adding gender dimension to that definition amplifies it to include violent acts perpetrated on women because they are women. With this addition, the definition is no longer simple or obvious. Understanding the phenomenon of gender violence requires an analysis of the patterns of violence

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directed towards women and the underlying mechanisms that permit the emergence and perpetuation of these patterns.

Liz Kelly (1998), *Surviving Sexual Polity* has defined violence as “any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the woman or girl at the time or later as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting her or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to contest an intimate contact”.

Dr Joanne Liddle modified this definition as “any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act that is experienced by the person at the time or later as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting or disregarding or removing the ability to control one’s own behaviour or an interaction, whether this be within the workplace, the home, on the streets or in any other area of the community”.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Choose the correct option:**

- (i) With people of Hispanic origin women earn ..... of the wages that African American men do.  
 (a) 90%                      (b) 85%                      (c) 65%                      (d) 75%
- (ii) Sexism occurs when men and women are framed within two dimensions of ..... cognition.  
 (a) cultural                      (b) political                      (c) social                      (d) None of these
- (iii) It is estimated that only ..... of midwives in the UK.  
 (a) 0.4%                      (b) 5%                      (c) 8%                      (d) 2%
- (iv) The world economic forum measures gender equity through a series of economic, educational and political benchmarks. It has ..... ranked in the United States.  
 (a) 18th                      (b) 15th                      (c) 19th                      (d) None of these
- (v) A girl’s school was started for the first time in ..... 1824.  
 (a) Kolkata                      (b) Chennai                      (c) Mumbai                      (d) None of these

**9.6 Summary**

- Gender description refers to disparity between individuals due to gender. Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically through chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; binary gender systems may reflect the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially constructed.
- There are natural differences between the sexes based on biological and anatomic factors, most notably differing reproductive roles. Biological differences include chromosomes, brain structure, and hormonal differences. There is a natural difference also in the relative physical strengths (on average) of the sexes.
- Wage discrimination is the discrepancy of wages between two groups due to a bias towards or against a specific trait with all other characteristics of both groups being equivalent. In the case of gender inequality, wage discrimination exists between the male and female gender. Historically, gender inequality has favored men over similarly qualified women.
- Cultural stereotypes are engrained in both men and women and these stereotypes are a possible explanation for gender inequality and the resulting gendered wage disparity. Women have traditionally been viewed as being caring and nurturing and are designated to occupations which require such skills. While these skills are culturally valued, they were typically associated

with domesticity, so occupations requiring these same skills are not economically valued. Men have traditionally been viewed as the breadwinner or the worker, so jobs held by men have been historically economically valued and occupations predominated by men continue to be economically valued and pay higher wages.

- Gender inequality can further be understood through the mechanisms of sexism. Discrimination takes place in this manner as men and women are subject to prejudicial treatment on the basis of gender alone. Sexism occurs when men and women are framed within two dimensions of social cognition.
- There are two schools of thought regarding the status of women in ancient India. One school has described women as “the equals of men”, while the other school holds that women were held not only in disrespect but even in positive hatred. Both schools refer to several passages from religious literature to prove their point. Apastamba had prescribed: “All must make a way for a woman when she is treading a path”. Since we behave in this way for those whom we respect, it indicates the high esteem in which women were held. Manu had said: “Where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes, but where they are not unhappy, the family ever prospers.” At another place, Manu had said: “Where women are honoured, the gods are pleased but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields any reward”. Yagnavalkya had said: “Women are the embodiment of all divine virtues on earth. Soma has bestowed all his purity on them, Gandharva has given them sweetness of speech and fire has showered all his brilliance to make them most attractive.” Such lofty ideals about them have been repeated in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata also. In the Mahabharata, women were held not only as centres of domestic life but also as pivots of entire social organization. Man was required to bend his will before that of his wife and to serve her and to adore her.
- Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. Usually, domestic aggression towards women and girls, due to various reasons remain hidden.
- Cultural and social factors are interlinked with the development and propagation of violent behaviour. With different processes of socialisation that men and women undergo, men take up stereotyped gender roles of domination and control, whereas women take up that of submission, dependence and respect for authority. A female child grows up with a constant sense of being weak and in need of protection, whether physical social or economic. This helplessness has led to her exploitation at almost every stage of life.
- The family socialises its members to accept hierarchical relations expressed in unequal division of labour between the sexes and power over the allocation of resources. The family and its operational unit is where the child is exposed to gender differences since birth, and in recent times even before birth, in the form of sex-determination tests leading to foeticide and female infanticide. The home, which is supposed to be the most secure place, is where women are most exposed to violence.

### 9.7 Key-Words

1. Ardhangnis : Better halves
2. Kumaris : Unmarried girls
3. Veil : Purdah



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### **9.8 Review Questions**

1. What is meant by Gender Discrimination? Explain.
2. Discuss changing status of Women.
3. Write an essay on the violence against women.
4. Explain briefly about the women in ancient India.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) (a)                      (ii) (c)                      (iii) (a)                      (iv) (c)                      (v) (c)

### **9.9 Further Readings**



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 10: Social Change

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and concept of social change.
- Discuss the nature of social change.
- Explain hinderances and forms of social change.

### Introduction

Social change is the change in established patterns of social relations, or change in social values, or change in structures and subsystems operating in society. Social change may be partial or total, though mostly it is partial. Just as change in the examination system is partial change in the educational system, similarly enacting a law which prescribes punishment for refusing entry to untouchables in Hindu temples, or a law which legally permits divorce in the society, or a law which does not permit marriage below the specific age, might be called partial changes in a society. Nationalization of banks, coal mines, etc. are the examples of partial change in the economic system of society because this co-exists with private property ownership in other spheres. The difficulty is in recognizing total change in the society or in a social system. If we say that not something but everything has changed in the society, it may be termed as total change, but it never happens. Similarly, a few aspects of family system, or marriage system or banking system or caste system, or factory system, etc. may change but we never find a total change in any of these social systems. No social system ever changes in toto. Social change is always or mostly partial.

Percy Cohen has said that one might also distinguish between minor changes and major or fundamental changes in a society. Change in the core or strategic features of a society or a social system may be defined as a major change. If we take the example of prison as a social system, its important features are: giving training to prisoners, arranging food, recreation and medical facilities for the inmates, giving punishment to criminals for violating the prison norms, permitting of fenders to maintain social contacts with their family and friends, making security arrangements to prevent escape from the prison, and so forth. Now suppose the entire security force is withdrawn and prisoners are given freedom to go to market at their will during the day time but spend nights compulsorily in the jail, it will be an example of change in that feature of the prison system which will affect other features too. As future and as the basic strategy for the restructuring of rural society and for expanding

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state control of the means of industrial production. The government's approach to private enterprise and to the role of the state in industrial development was indicated in Industries Development and Regulation Act which provided that no new industrial unit or substantial expansion of existing plants could be made without a license from the Central Government. This rule was, however, liberalized in the economic policy adopted by the government in 1992.

### 10.1 Concept and Meaning of Social Change

Social change has been understood and defined in many different ways. This is due to differences in perceptions and perspective of the concept and variation in labeling weightage to the idea and nature of social change. However, it is generally agreed among sociologists that the focus in the discourse of social change is the aspect of occurrence of significant alterations in the organization *and/or* structure and functions of social life rather than the *regular*, short term, and predictable reoccurrences.

We shall attempt a working definition of social change. The definition incorporates the aspects of significant changes in the various patterns of social relationships social processes, social patterns, action and interaction, the rules of relationships and conduct (norms), values, symbols and cultural products. The concept of social change also refers to variations over time in both the material and non-material aspects of culture. These changes take place both from within the societies (endogenous forces) and from without (exogenous forces) that is brought about by external forces. The concept of social transformation is very closely related to that of social change. Social transformation is a relatively new term that has gained some popularity in the recent decades in the discourse of the social sciences. In fact, social transformation is a radical form of social change. It is a more abrupt change of a society and/or state, usually with a larger scale, through agents such as revolution. The concept connotes the idea of a particularly deep and far-reaching change that alters the way of life of the people within a limited span of time. Social *change* is on the other hand essentially concerned with minor and persistent changes in the social organization and/or social structure of a society such as changes brought about in the patterns of family, marriage, and educational institution. In the following discussion, we shall use social change as connoting both the persistent changes (social change) and the radical and abrupt changes (social transformation) unless specific mention is made.

### 10.2 Goals of Social Change

At the time of political independence of the country, many intellectuals felt that India had failed to modernize itself not because it lacked the wherewithal to develop but it had been the victim of capitalist imperialism. The socio-cultural transformation we had initiated four and a half decades ago and the one which we want to plan for the coming decades aims at structural changes which could meet the emerging needs and aspirations of the people. The collective goals we had planned to achieve in the very first decade of the republic were social, economic, political and cultural. The *social* goals were: equality, justice, freedom, rationality, and individualism. The *economic* goals include: distributive justice and economic rationalism in place of economic theology. The *political* goals were: establishing a political system where the ruler is accountable to the ruled, decentralization of political power, and associating more and more people with the decision-making processes. Our *cultural* goal was a change from the sacred to the secular ideology.

The goals given by our power elites were:

- **To create a strong central state:** This was necessary because historically, political authority in India had been fragmented. After independence, it was feared that the religious, linguistic, caste, tribal, class, etc. forces may further attempt to fragment authority. Strong federal government with some authority to state governments alone would thwart attempts of such fragmentation.
- **To modernize the economy:** This was necessary for raising the low per capita income, for making the country self-reliant, and for having an indigenous capital goods sector which is not dependent on foreign private capital.
- **To create a socialist pattern of society:** This was necessary to restrict, but not eliminate, the role of private capitalists and emphasize public ownership of major industries.

- To reduce inequalities among castes, regions, and classes.
- To preserve fundamental human rights, such as right of free speech, right of free religious expression, right of political participation, and so forth.
- To establish a society where individuals would be motivated by spirit of selflessness, sacrifice, co-operation and idealism.

### 10.3 Approaches of Social Change

Yogendra Singh in his early writings on social change (1969: 11) had talked of three approaches to the study of nature and process of social change in India: philosophico-historical and metaphysical approach, historical and political approach, and social anthropological and sociological approach.

The source for the philosophico-historical approach was described as the Indian and the western philosophies. Indian philosophy and religion had proposed a philosophical theory of change characterized by cyclical rhythm in society (*vilai-prilai; satyug-kalyug*), broken and reactivated from time to time through *avatars* (reincarnations). The foundation of this theory was belief in *karma*, *dharma* and *moksha*. At one time, this theory was much accepted but now it has almost waned because systematic analysis is not possible. Social change by the historicopolitical approach is studied through records of Indian history. For example, change in the caste system or change in the status of women is studied by systematic analysis of historical records pertaining to different periods, say Maurya period, Gupta period, Brahmanical period, Mughal period, British period, and post-independence period. The limitation of this approach lies in the fact that all historical records may not be available or the evidence may not be reliable. Consequently, reliance on this approach for sociological generalizations would be fallacious. The socio-anthropological approach was considered more systematic than the other two (metaphysical and historical) approaches. The method in this approach is intensive field-work or participant observation. The theoretical propositions in this approach refer to a body of ethnographic data, either the result of one's own or another's field-work. Theoretical conclusions formulated by others are developed further by applying them to body of intensive data collected by the social anthropologist himself. M.N. Srinivas (1985: 137) is of the opinion that a few weeks or months with a people, through interpreters and a few selected informants cannot provide a reliable or intimate view of the people studied. A social anthropologist is expected to spend at least twelve to eighteen months among the people he studies to master their language as to observe as much as he can. The British social anthropologists now not emphasize culture but society, social structure and social relations. The social anthropologists have also come to focus on the 'comparative method' which includes study of different societies. Further, knowing that the institutions of a society are interrelated, the social anthropologist studies, along with the specific institution, all the other institutions related with it. The limitation of socio-anthropological approach is that effort to generalize about the macrocosm is on the basis of the microcosm. This is on the implicit assumption of 'homogeneity' and 'universality'. But in India, we find more heterogeneity and diversity. As such, by studying change between two time-periods in a certain institution (say family, caste, etc.) in one village, we cannot generalize that similar change takes place in other villages or in whole Indian society as well. The weaknesses in the socio-anthropological approach are eliminated in the sociological approach. In sociological approach, the systematic empirical inquiries are conducted at macrocosmic level and generalizations are developed.

In his later writings on social change (1977), Yogendra Singh talked of five approaches in studying social change in India. These are: evolutionary approach, cultural approach (Sanskritization and Westernization, Little and Great traditions, and Parochialization and Universalization), structural approach (based on functional and dialectical models), ideological approach, and integration approach.

#### Evolutionary Approach

In the evolutionary approach, gradual development is studied from simple to complex form through a long series of small changes. Each change results in a minor modification of the system, but the cumulative effect of many changes over a long period of time is the emergence of new complex form. Within the evolutionary approach, the four sub-ap-proaches used by different scholars are: unilinear, universal, cyclical and multilinear.

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The *unilinear* sub-approach talks of change in stages and believes that every stage is better and higher. The *universal* sub-approach does not believe in change in stages but it talks of change from simple to complex. It also talks of increasing differentiation and integration. The *cyclical* sub-approach talks of change in rhythmic way. The *multilinear* sub-approach concentrates on the process of adaptation to environment.

### Conflict Approach

According to Marxist's conflict approach, economic change produces other changes through the mechanism of intensified conflict between social groups and between different parts of the social system. Some theorists like D.P. Mukherjee, A.R. Desai, M.N. Dutta, have suggested that conflict in its broadest sense must be the cause of social change. The reasoning behind this is that if there is consensus in society and if the various sectors are integrated, there is little pressure for change; therefore, change must be due to conflict between groups and/or between different parts of the social and cultural systems.

### Cultural Approach

In the cultural approach, change is studied by analyzing changing cultural elements of society. Within this approach, M.N. Srinivas studied change through sanskritization and westernization processes; Robert Redfield through change in Little and Great traditions; and McKim Marriott through the process of Parochialization and Universatization. Sanskritization (Srinivas, 1973) refers to the process of adopting customs, rituals, ideology and way of life of higher castes by the lower castes with a view to raise their position in the caste hierarchy. It is the process of cultural mobility in the traditional social structure. The higher castes are not always Brahmins; they could be Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and so on in various regions of the country. Westernization is adopting the ideals, values (like rationalism, humanism), institutions and technology of the western society by the non-western society. Some scholars are, however, of the opinion that both sanskritization and westernization processes do not fully describe the ramifications of socio-cultural changes in India. Sanskritization refers only to the positional change of an individual or a group in the caste system; it does not explain change in the society or social system. Yogendra Singh (1973: 9) has also maintained that to describe the social changes occurring in modern India in terms of sanskritization and westernization is to describe it primarily in cultural and not in structural terms.

Following Robert Redfield (1955) who analyzed social change in the Mexican communities with the help of the concepts of Little and Great traditions, McKim Marriott (1955) and Milton Singer (1959) studied social change in India with this conceptual framework. Little traditions are indigenous customs, deities, and rites found at the folks' or peasants' level. They persist at the level of village community and their growth is internal. Those traditions which grow because of outside contacts and are found at elite level are called 'Great traditions'. Explaining cultural changes, Milton Singer has said that (a) the growth of 'great tradition' was continuous with the 'Little tradition', (b) the cause of cultural continuity in India is the sharing of common cultural consciousness by the people and having a similar mental outlook, (c) the common cultural consciousness is formed by sacred books and sacred objects, and (d) India's cultural continuity with the past is so great that even accepting change does not result in discarding ancient traditions. Thus, even though modern influences are changing many aspects of Indian society and culture, they have not destroyed its (India's) basic structure and pattern. The process of moving of elements of Little tradition (customs, rites, etc.) upward to the level of Great tradition is called 'universalization' by McKim Marriott, while the process of moving of elements of Great tradition downward to become part of the Little tradition is called 'parochialization'. Thus, these concepts (of universalization and parochialization) also describe the processes of cultural change.

### Structural Approach

This approach analyzes change in the network of social relationships and in social structures (like castes, kinship, factory, administrative structures, etc.). These social relationships and structures are compared intra-culturally as well as cross-culturally. According to Yogendra Singh (1977: 17), a structural analysis of change consists of demonstrating the qualitative nature of new adaptations in the patterned relationships. For example, when the spouse is selected by a child himself and not by



his parents, the nature of quality of conjugal relations is bound to be different. However, in India, the structural approach has rarely been used in the analysis of change, while the cultural approach has been frequently used.

### Integrated Approach

Yogendra Singh (1973: 22-27) feels that none of the above approaches provides a comprehensive perspective on social change in India. He has, therefore, integrated a series of concepts relating to social change and developed a new approach or paradigm, what he calls an 'integrated approach'. In this approach, he integrates (a) direction of change (that is, linear or cyclical), (b) context of change (that is, through macro or micro levels of structures), (c) source of change (that is, through external contacts or internal sources), and (d) substantive domain of phenomena undergoing change (that is, the culture and the social structure).

### Planning and Social Change

Planning is commitment to concerted action. It is adjustment of social institutions to new social, economic, and political conditions. It is not necessarily rational because it is not always guided by reliable scientific information. For example, in India, if for eliminating poverty, emphasis is laid only on increase in production and the issue of control over population explosion is completely neglected, how could it be called rational planning? Social planning aims at: (i) change is social organization, and (ii) community welfare (like improving educational facilities, increasing employment opportunities, doing away with evil social practices, etc.)

According to Riemer, three important characteristics of planning are: (a) prior determination of objectives and proclamation of values; (b) concreteness, that is, laying down concrete details of its subject-matter; and (c) co-ordination of diversified skills and diversified professional training. For the success of a plan, we have to bear in mind a few things: (i) plan must stem from the people themselves, (ii) people's participation is extremely necessary, (iii) initiative (for implementing the plan) is to be taken not by the planners but by the activists in different walks of life, (iv) priorities have to be decided in advance, and (v) arbitration in decision-making must be by a person who has technical knowledge and is a trained professional because he has the capability of visualizing alternative solutions.

In India, the economic planning was advocated by M. Visves waraya in 1940s. The Indian National Congress appointed a National Planning Committee on the eve of the Second World War (1938-39) to frame an all-India plan. But it was the Bombay Plan (known as Tata-Birla Plan) which made people planning-conscious in India. The Government of India set up in 1943 a committee of the Viceroy's Council, known as Reconstruction Committee of Council (RCC), which was assisted by Provincial Policy Committees to chalk out plans for reconstruction. In 1944, the Department of Planning and Development was also created. However, at this stage, government plans were not concerned with definite economic targets. They were mainly concerned with issues like raising standard of living, increasing purchasing power of the people, stabilizing agricultural prices, developing industries, removing wealth disparities, and raising backward classes. Different provinces were asked to prepare their own plans. There was no resource budget and no priorities. Thus, it could be pointed out that induced social change could not be possible in India till its independence because: (i) no priorities for development were determined through adequate planning, (ii) no adequate statistics were prepared regarding the need of production, national income, etc., (iii) limited foreign exchange was available for development purposes, (iv) private entrepreneurs were reluctant to invest huge amounts in industrial development because of the government's policies, (v) there was no facility for getting raw materials, machineries, and capital goods from abroad, (vi) no serious efforts were made to check the growth of population, (vii) planning mechanism was not possible in the absence of proper co-ordination among the provincial and the central committees, (viii) inflation had increased due to world wars, and (ix) the administrative machinery was developed mainly with a view to discharge the policing function of the state. The bureaucrats were not trained to take interest in the development schemes.

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After independence, the Government of India appointed the Planning Commission in 1950 to coordinate all state and central plans. The Commission was to: (i) determine priorities, (ii) plan balanced utilization of the country's resources, (iii) make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country, (iv) assess the progress achieved from time to time and recommend readjustment, and (v) identify factors which retard economic development.

Since its inception, the Planning Commission has so far prepared eight Five Year Plans, each focusing on different objectives. For example, when the First Five Year Plan launched in April 1951 emphasized on agricultural development, the Second Five Year Plan emphasized on heavy industrial development, while the remaining six plans concentrated on both agricultural and industrial development. Other priorities of the Five Year Plans for the induced change were: family planning, increasing employment opportunities, increasing annual national income by 5 per cent to 7 per cent, growth of basic industries (like, steel, power, chemicals), maximum use of manpower resources, decentralization of economic power, reducing inequalities in income distribution, achieving social justice with equality, and so on. It could be said that the central objective of planning in India has been to raise the standard of living of the people and to open out to them opportunities for a richer and more varied life.

But has planning in India achieved the objectives of planned change? During the period of forty-three years of planning, the average rate of economic growth has been 3.5 per cent. Though it is not bad in comparison to the world's average of 4 per cent, it is definitely poor in comparison to the average of the developing countries of 7 per cent to 10 per cent. During 1951 to 1991 (that is, at the end of the Seventh Five Year Plan in April 1992), our national income had increased by about 3.5 per cent.

Though the government claims that the number of people below the poverty line has reduced by about 15 per cent between 1972 and 1992 but since the number of unemployed people registered in employment exchanges has increased from 4.37 lakh in 1952 to 50.99 lakh in 1971, 178 lakh in 1981 and 334 lakh in 1990 (*India Today*, May 31, 1991: 117), we cannot concede that objectives of planned change have been achieved and the quality of life of the people has been improved. No wonder, more people feel frustrated today and the number of agitations is increasing every year. We have to wait and watch before we decide to give planning a long holiday.

Following Ronald Lippit (1958: 96-99), it may be pointed out that certain principles have to be put into practice if a development programme has to be made successful. Some of the important principles are: (i) development proposals and procedures should be mutually consistent, (ii) the goals of development must be stated in terms that have positive value to the community, (iii) the planners must have a thorough knowledge of the beliefs and values of the community's culture, (iv) development must take the whole community into account, (v) the community must be an active partner in the development process, and (vi) communication and co-ordination between various agencies of development is essential. The countries, including Japan and Germany, which have done better are those which have no planning commissions and have no plans. Should India follow the same path?

## 10.4 Nature of Social Change

Have we realized our collective goals? Indian society was described as traditional society till the first quarter of the twentieth century. Though the British Government did industrialize our country and introduced several economic and social changes, but it was not interested in raising the quality of life of the people. Have we succeeded in modernizing our society after political independence? If yes, what has been the pattern of social change or modernization? This question can be answered first by trying to understand what is a traditional society and what is a modern society?

A *traditional* society is one in which (i) the status of a person is determined by birth and is fixed, that is, individuals do not strive for social mobility; (ii) individual's behaviour is governed by custom and ways of behaviour of people vary only slightly from generation to generation; (iii) social organization is based on hierarchy; (iv) individual identifies himself with primary groups and kinship relations predominate in interaction; (v) individual is given more importance in social relations than his position (vi) people are conservative; (vii) economy is simple and economic productivity above subsistence is relatively low; and (viii) mythical thought predominates in society.

Contrary to this, a transitional or a *modern society* is one in which (i) individual's status in society is determined by his own potentialities and capabilities; (ii) a person's behaviour is governed more by law than by custom; (iii) social structure is based on equality; (iv) secondary relations predominate over primary relations; individuals identify with different kinds of groups as different situations require and may compete for higher rank in each context; (v) individual's position in society is achieved and it is given more importance in social relations; (vi) people are innovative; (vii) economy is based on complex technology; and (viii) rational thought predominates in society.

Does this mean that traditionalism and modernity are two extremes and the two cannot co-exist? Scholars like S.C. Dube, and Yogendra Singh are of the opinion that the two can co-exist. Accepting traditionalism does not mean completely rejecting modernization. It may simply mean regulating the forces of modernization. Similarly, accepting modernization does not mean complete rejection of traditionalism. It may mean retaining only those elements of traditionalism which are considered by the society as functional for it in view of the set (collective) goals.

Accepting this viewpoint, we have to find out, to what extent Indian society continues to be traditional and to what extent has it become modern?

It will not be wrong to say that the nature of social change in India is such that we find synthesis of tradition and modernity. On the one hand, we have discarded those traditional beliefs, practices and institutions which we believed were more dysfunctional and on the other hand, we have imbibed those modern values and have created those modern institutions which we thought will help us in achieving our basic goal of 'change in quality of life of the people'.

In comparison to the British period, today we enjoy more individual freedom; we have more opportunities to rise in social scale; we have become more rational in discarding traditional social practices or creating new institutional structures; the number of people living below the poverty line has decreased; our per capita income in real terms has increased by 92 per cent in four decades since we became a republic; and active higher social status and positions of privilege and rank is no longer an illusion for the backward and the low caste people.

In forty-five years, India's economy has grown by 3.5 per cent per year, per capita growth rate has been 1.4 per cent, agricultural growth has been 2.7 per cent and industrial growth has been 1.0 per cent. On the other hand, inflation rate has been 7.0 per cent, total indebtedness is 2.28 lakh crore rupees, exports have gone down, and about 33 per cent people are living below the poverty line in the rural areas and 45 per cent in the urban areas. There are 34.2 per cent of the total number of poor people of the world in India.

Have we achieved communal harmony? Have we been able to bring women on par with men? Have we been able to ameliorate the conditions of untouchables? Have we been able to remove the feelings of deprivations among different classes like cultivators, industrial workers, daily wage-earners? Have we been able to alter property relations in favour of the less privileged? Can we claim to have egalitarian society?

The existing widespread unrest is the result of increasing contradictions in our social system. Some important contradictions are: our roles have become modern but our values continue to be traditional; we project egalitarianism but we practice discrimination; our aspirations have become very high but the means for achieving these aspirations are either not available or not accessible; we talk of nationalism but we encourage parochialism; we claim that our republic is dedicated to equality but in fact it is mired in an archaic system of caste; we claim to have become rationalists but we endure injustice and unfairness with fatalistic resignation; we proclaim the policy of liberalization but we still impose too many controls; we support individualism but we reinforce collectivism; we aim at ideational culture but we hanker after sensate culture; many new laws have been enacted and old ones modified but these laws are either not implemented or are full of loopholes and benefit none except the legal profession. There are too many laws and too little justice, too many public servants and too little public service, too many programmes and plans and too little welfare, too much government and too little administration.

The result of all these contradictions is that social unrest has increased in our society. The development has encountered formidable opposition from the corrupt and non-committed political elite and sub-

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elite who are much more interested in their personal prosperity than in the future of the country, from the special interest groups and the economic monopolizers who prefer to flourish in the non-competitive environment, and from the fanatic communal and religious leaders and the uninterested bureaucrats who are reluctant to shed their enormous powers.

The fundamental rights guaranteed by India's Constitution assert individual liberties while the directive principles, on the other hand, commit the state to promote the welfare of the people by establishing a social order based on justice – social, economic and political – by systematic distribution of material resources, and by preventing the concentration of wealth. Thus, the fundamental rights and the directive principles represent two different traditions. When the former are 'justiciable', the latter are not. The 25th Amendment to the Constitution gave primacy to the directive principles (that is, commitment to socialism) above that of individual liberties (fundamental rights). Jaya Prakash Narain warned that the abrogation of the fundamental rights for the achievement of socialism would destroy India's democratic institutions. But Indira Gandhi's declaring of national emergency in 1975 restricted fundamental rights. Indian socialism thus faced crisis because emergency in 1975 was not promulgated for creating a social order based on justice but for the vested interests of the political elite in power. The result was that the Congress party lost power at the Centre in 1988 elections, that is, after remaining in power for forty-one years. When Rajiv Congress came in power in 1984 in the parliamentary elections, socialist ideology had lost its lustre. The Janata Dal government also did not focus upon it during its remaining in power for two years. The Rao government in early 1992 and the Congress party in its April 1992 session at Tirupati called for liberalizing the economy, ending licensing in industries, permitting expansion of the larger private firms, eliminating subsidies, encouraging collaborative agreements with foreign capital, ending the policy of nationalizing sick industries, and opening the economy to greater competition. Thus, socialism unofficially faced its death in India in early 1992 and India chose to adopt new strategy of development. Communism died in Russia after seventy years. There are no prominent intellectual spokesmen for socialism in India today. The bulk of India's educated youth in political power and in educational institutions show no sympathy for the socialist perspective. How far the new liberal and competitive non-socialist policies will take India to its goals is yet to be seen.

### **10.5 Hinderances to Social Change**

It is true that Indian society is changing and certain directions of social change and development are clearly apparent, yet it is a fact that we have not been able to achieve all those goals which we wanted to achieve. What have been the hinderances in achieving our goals? Some western scholars like Gunnar Myrdal suggest that the main cause of India's economic weakness is not lack of technical skills among the people but rather a lack of initiative, of interest in improving their status, and of respect for labour. Such views are illogical, biased, and vigorously challenged by Indian and some western scholars like Morris (1967), Milton Singer (1966, 1969), T.N. Madan (1968), Yogendra Singh (1973), and S.C. Dube (1982). A good number of studies in rural India have shown keen desire on the part of the villagers for improvement. They are willing to work hard, change their harmful customs, eschew temptations, and rise above human fallibilities. The impediments to developmental efforts are not human factors but political environment, social structures, and economic handicaps.

#### **Forces of Tradition**

Change in a society is possible only by fostering attitudes of receptivity toward new ways of doing things. Sticking to one's traditions and refusing to accept new ideas act as a barrier to social change. The degree of cultural accumulation and the amount of contact with other societies determine the nature and extent of social change within a society. The possibility of invention and the introduction of new traits from other cultures is limited by the degree of cultural accumulation, which in turn depends upon the willingness to discard traditions – if not all, at least non-utilitarian and dysfunctional ones. What transpires through contacts with other cultures is diffusion, the source of most social change. Relatively isolated societies experience little change, whereas societies which are meeting grounds of people from many cultures experience rapid social change. In a society which does not change, one finds people refusing to intermingle freely and declining to share others, customs,

knowledge, technology and ideologies. This refusal is because people consider their traditions as sacred. They allege that the merit of traditions derives from transmission from a sacred orientation. Traditionally transmitted norms are accepted not because they exist, but because they fill the need to have rules in a given situation. They perform a stabilizing function in society. So, the role which traditional norms are likely to play in an economically and technically changing society depends at least in part, on the place which tradition-oriented behaviour holds in the society. And here we can draw a division on the continuum of tradition and modernity. For, in traditional society, traditional values are given importance because they have been transmitted from the past. But in modern society, the conditions for change are welcomed because they offer solutions to present problems.

### **Caste System**

The caste system has been a great obstacle in achieving both justice and prosperity. Kingsley Davis (1951: 216) was correct when he said that the conception of hereditary occupation is exactly the opposite of the idea of open opportunities, free competition, increasing specialization and individual mobility associated with a dynamic industrial economy.

Factionalism is an important factor in the failure of development projects, particularly in rural areas. Caste and sub-caste membership is one basis of the formation of factions. In many areas where farmers belong to one caste amongst many, other castes do not wish to cooperate as it will be of no direct benefit to them. In areas where farmers are the ruling group, the development programme likewise fails to gain widespread acceptance. Any project that apparently aids one caste is opposed by all other castes who are jealous of their position in society or eager to defend their own position at every one else's expense. Like caste factions, the intra-caste factions also act as barrier in social change.

Earlier the restrictions of the caste system on interaction with people of other castes did not permit mobility and industrialization, and today its use in politics has presented rulers to function in constructive ways. William Kapp has also pointed out that Hindu culture and Hindu social organization are determining factors in India's low rate of development. Milton Singer, however, does not accept this viewpoint. His contention is that there is no considerable evidence to indicate that Hindu culture and caste system have had any dampening effect on India's development. He describes Kapp's conclusions as largely speculative extrapolations derived from misunderstood scriptural concepts.

### **Illiteracy, Ignorance and Fear**

Ignorance caused by illiteracy creates fear which resists social change. The customary ways of doing things are considered safe because they have been tried. Opinion about trial in villages or in simple – societies is not so rationalistic. New is unknown and therefore must be avoided. If inventions, which are in part determined by the existing material culture, are frequent, a people become accustomed to change and the hostility to change tends to break down. Conversely, if material culture inventions are frequent change, may be rare and feared. When illiteracy promotes hierarchy, education insists on the idea of equality. It encourages rationality too. The educated people generate all kinds of new desires, inventions, etc. and also develop means for achieving them.

### **The Values**

The role played by values in social change is a subject of much controversy. For example, Hegel felt that social change was a result of the unfolding of ideas. Marx felt that values had no effect on long term social change. He felt that social change was exclusively a result of the interplay of economic forces and was manifested in the class struggle. Most of the Indian sociologists agree that values do influence both individual and collective behaviour thereby influencing social processes. Many also feel that values are the result of change and therefore should not always be considered as primary factors in social change. The values of the caste system (hierarchy, pollution, endogamy, etc.) were a great barrier in changing Indian society. It was only when technology and industrialization were accepted by the common people that geographical mobility and consequently the social mobility was made possible. Fatalism also prevented hard work and social change. Famines, floods, earthquakes, poverty, unemployment were all considered to be the result of God's wrath. In industrial societies, people have proved that control over nature is possible and undesirable situation is not a hopeless block but a challenge to man's ingenuity.



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Ethnocentrism (belief in the superiority of one's culture) also prevents persons in accepting things/innovations from other cultures. Ethnocentrism is so deeply engrained in the minds of Indians that even when they are sensitive to the philosophy of cultural relativism, they easily fall victim to evaluating others in terms of their own views. The pride and dignity too prevent people from accepting things suggested by others. They think that they are so matured and learned that others' suggestions need to be discarded.

**The Power Elite**

It has been recognized almost by all scholars in our country that government has been a principal agency of social change and a good part of social change has been stimulated and directed by government agencies. In government, the innovative and reformist functions rest with 'power elite', or what Pareto has called the 'governing elite'. All elites are not committed to community's welfare or society's development. Many elites function on the basis of vested interests. In terms of their interest in self (S) and in public (P), I classify them in four groups (Ahuja: 1975: 65-66): indifferent (S -, P -), manipulative (S +, P -), progressive (S -, P +), and rationalist (S +, P +). The progress in a society depends upon the type of political elite who predominate. My contention is that in the first two decades of independence our elites were nationalist-rational while in the last two and a half decades, they are parochialist-irrational. Since indifferent and manipulative elites have dominated over progressive and rationalist elites, the development of our society has been blocked. Like political elites, our bureaucrats are more ritualists than innovative, our judiciary is more traditional than liberal, our police is committed more to politicians in power than to law. Thus, since our policy-makers and law-enforcers do not share the necessity of social change conducive to people's welfare, development has been overlooked.

**Population Explosion**

The nation's potential for achieving the set goals is handicapped by explosion in our population. About 47.3 thousand persons are added to our existing population every day, or 17 million persons every year, or 170 million people in a decade. It has been calculated that for every addition of about 135 million people in our country, we will require every year 20 million cereals, 25,000 meters of cloth, and also 2,500 million houses, 1.35 lakh primary and secondary schools, 4,000 hospitals and dispensaries, 1,500 primary health centres, 2 lakhs hospital beds and 50 thousand doctors (*India Today*, September 16-30, 1979: 53). The large population thus checks our efforts to contain poverty and bring rapid development.

It may be concluded that as regards the direction of social change in India is concerned, there has been considerable cultural continuity along with change based on imbibing modern values, practices and institutions. The traditional patterns have not been held static and modern behaviour is commonly fitted into long-standing patterns of action.

**10.6 Forms of Social Change**

**Transformations and Revolution**

Group conflict has often been viewed as a basic form of social change, especially of those radical and sudden social transformations identified as revolutions. Marxists in particular tend to depict social life in capitalist society as a struggle between a ruling class, which wishes to maintain the system, and a dominated class, which strives for radical change. Social change then is the result of that struggle. These ideas are basic to what sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf has called a conflict model of society.

The notion of conflict becomes more relevant to the explanation of social change if it is broadened to include competition between rival groups. Nations, firms, universities, sports associations, and artistic schools are groups between which such rivalry occurs. Competition stimulates the introduction and diffusion of innovations, especially when they are potentially power-enhancing. Thus, the leaders of non-Western states feel the necessity of adopting Western science and technology, even though their ideology may be anti-Western, because it is only by these means that they can maintain or enhance national autonomy and power.

Additionally, competition may lead to growth in the size and complexity of the entities involved. The classic example of this process, as first suggested by Adam Smith, is the tendency in capitalism toward collusion and the establishment of monopolies when small firms are driven out of the competitive marketplace. Another example came from Norbert Elias, who suggested that western European nation-states were born out of competitive struggles between feudal lords. Competition also dominates theories of individualism, in which social change is seen as the result of individuals pursuing their self-interest. Game theory and other mathematical devices, however, have shown that individuals acting in their own self-interest will in certain conditions cooperate with one another and thereby widen the existing social networks.

### **Tension and adaptation**

In structural functionalism, social change is regarded as an adaptive response to some tension within the social system. When some part of an integrated social system changes, a tension between this and other parts of the system is created, which will be resolved by the adaptive change of the other parts. An example is what the American sociologist William Fielding Ogburn has called cultural lag, which refers in particular to a gap that develops between fast-changing technology and other slower-paced sociocultural traits.

### **Diffusion**

**Diffusion**, is the process of the spread of culture from group to group. It has been considered as one of the main causes of social change. Diffusion takes place within societies and between societies through contact. This is why the process of diffusion becomes difficult to penetrate in a situation of isolation. Jazz, which was originated among black musicians of New Orleans diffused to other groups within the society, and then later spread to other societies as well and to different parts of the world.

Social movement is certainly one of the most important factors of social change. We can understand social movement into two different forms- one, those movements organised to create some new social forms that are usually radical and liberal in nature; and two, those movements concerned with maintaining or recreating older social forms that are generally conservative or reactionary. However, in both these cases, social change will depend much on the success of the movements and the impact it could cause to the society.

Revolutionary movement may be considered as a kind of social movement. Revolutionary movements also cause social change. The French Revolution of 1789 witnessed the rise of French democracy, rise of modern civilian army, and was a great eye-opener and model for many peoples in different parts of the world who are struggling for liberation and justice. The Russian Revolution is also another example of revolutionary change that brought an end to monarchical government and class stratification in Russia.

### **Diffusion of innovations**

Some social changes result from the innovations that are adopted in a society. These can include technological inventions, new scientific knowledge, new beliefs, or a new fashion in the sphere of leisure. Diffusion is not automatic but selective; an innovation is adopted only by people who are motivated to do so. Furthermore, the innovation must be compatible with important aspects of the culture. One reason for the adoption of innovations by larger groups is the example set by higher-status groups which act as reference groups for other people. Many innovations tend to follow a pattern of diffusion from higher to lower-status groups. More specifically, most early adopters of innovations in modern Western societies, according to several studies, are young, urban, affluent, and highly educated, with a high occupational status. Often they are motivated by the wish to distinguish themselves from the crowd. After diffusion has taken place, however, the innovation is no longer a symbol of distinction. This motivates the same group to look for something new again. This mechanism may explain the succession of fads, fashions, and social movements.

### **Planning and institutionalization of change**

Social change may result from goal-directed large-scale social planning. The possibilities for planning by government bureaucracies and other large organizations have increased in modern societies. Most

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social planning is short-term, however; the goals of planning are often not reached, and, even if the planning is successful in terms of the stated goals, it often has unforeseen consequences. The wider the scope and the longer the time span of planning, the more difficult it is to attain the goals and avoid unforeseen or undesired consequences. This has most often been the case in communist and totalitarian societies, where the most serious efforts toward integrated and long-term planning were put into practice. Most large-scale and long-term social developments in any society are still largely unplanned, yet large-scale changes resulting from laws to establish large governmental agencies, such as for unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, or guaranteed medical care, have produced significant institutional changes in most industrial societies.

Planning implies institutionalization of change, but institutionalization does not imply planning. Many unplanned social changes in modern societies are institutionalized; they originate in organizations permanently oriented to innovation, such as universities and the research departments of governments and private firms, but their social repercussions are not controlled. In the fields of science and technology, change is especially institutionalized, which produces social change that is partly intended and partly unintended.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Choose the correct option:**

- (i) The social goals are ..... .
  - (a) equality and justice
  - (b) freedom and rationality
  - (c) rationality and individualism
  - (d) All of these
- (ii) The economic planning was advocated by M. Visveswarayas in ..... .
  - (a) 1940s
  - (b) 1950s
  - (c) 1990s
  - (d) None of these
- (iii) At per government claim the poverty line has reduced between 1972 and 1992.
  - (a) 15%
  - (b) 20%
  - (c) 10%
  - (d) 18%
- (iv) The total number of poor people of the world in India is ..... .
  - (a) 30%
  - (b) 25%
  - (c) 50%
  - (d) 34.2%
- (v) Indira Gandhi’s declaring of national emergency in ..... restricted fundamental rights.
  - (a) 1973
  - (b) 1974
  - (c) 1975
  - (d) 1981

**10.7 Summary**

- The causes of social change are diverse, and the processes of change can be identified as either short-term trends or long-term developments. Change can be either cyclic or one-directional.
- The mechanisms of social change can be varied and interconnected. Several mechanisms may be combined in one explanatory model of social change. For example, innovation by business might be stimulated by competition and by government regulation.
- To the degree that change processes are regular and interconnected, social change itself is structured. Since about 1965 there has been a shift in emphasis from “structure” to “change” in social theory. Change on different levels—social dynamics in everyday life and short-term transformations and long-term developments in society at large—has become the focus of much attention in the study of society.

**10.8 Key-Words**

- 1. Social Change : Change in the social structure and relationships of a society which is often interchangeably used with cultural change.
- 2. Diffusion : The spread of culture traits from groups to group.

## 10.9 Review Questions

Notes

1. What do you mean by social change? Explain.
2. Explain the goals of social change.
3. Discuss the various approaches of social change
4. What are the forms of social change? Discuss
5. Write a short note on the nature of social change.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) (d)                    (ii) (a)                    (iii) (a)                    (iv) (d)                    (v) (c)

## 10.10 Further Readings



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 11: Theories of Social Change

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss evolutionary theories
- Explain cyclical and linear theories
- Understand mechanisms of social change

### Introduction

Social change is constantly encountered in our daily lives. This is because the society we live in is itself changing all the time. The concept of social transformation is very closely linked to social change. Sometimes the two terms are used interchangeably. Sociologists have been trying to answer and explain, in main, three basic questions of social change. First, the question of whether social change is good or bad; second, the causal factors of social change; and third, the impact of social change to society. Modern sociology helps us understand and provide with explanation the complex set of changes that societies experience in the process of human history. In this unit, we shall discuss the concepts and various aspects of social change and social transformation.

**Social change**, in sociology, the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems.

Throughout the historical development of their discipline, sociologists have borrowed models of social change from other academic fields. In the late 19th century, when evolution became the predominant model for understanding biological change, ideas of social change took on an evolutionary cast, and, though other models have refined modern notions of social change, evolution persists as an underlying principle.

Other sociological models created analogies between social change and the West's technological progress. In the mid-20th century, anthropologists borrowed from the linguistic theory of structuralism to elaborate an approach to social change called structural functionalism. This theory postulated the existence of certain basic institutions (including kinship relations and division of labour) that determine social behaviour. Because of their interrelated nature, a change in one institution will affect other institutions.



Various theoretical schools emphasize different aspects of change. Marxist theory suggests that changes in modes of production can lead to changes in class systems, which can prompt other new forms of change or incite class conflict. A different view is conflict theory, which operates on a broad base that includes all institutions. The focus is not only on the purely divisive aspects of conflict, because conflict, while inevitable, also brings about changes that promote social integration. Taking yet another approach, structural-functional theory emphasizes the integrating forces in society that ultimately minimize instability.

Social change can evolve from a number of different sources, including contact with other societies (diffusion), changes in the ecosystem (which can cause the loss of natural resources or widespread disease), technological change (epitomized by the Industrial Revolution, which created a new social group, the urban proletariat), and population growth and other demographic variables. Social change is also spurred by ideological, economic, and political movements.

## The changing social order

Social change in the broadest sense is any change in social relations. Viewed this way, social change is an ever-present phenomenon in any society. A distinction is sometimes made then between processes of change within the social structure, which serve in part to maintain the structure, and processes that modify the structure (societal change).

The specific meaning of social change depends first on the social entity considered. Changes in a small group may be important on the level of that group itself but negligible on the level of the larger society. Similarly, the observation of social change depends on the time span studied; most short-term changes are negligible when examined in the long run. Small-scale and short-term changes are characteristic of human societies, because customs and norms change, new techniques and technologies are invented, environmental changes spur new adaptations, and conflicts result in redistributions of power.

This universal human potential for social change has a biological basis. It is rooted in the flexibility and adaptability of the human species – the near absence of biologically fixed action patterns (instincts) on the one hand and the enormous capacity for learning, symbolizing, and creating on the other hand. The human constitution makes possible changes that are not biologically (that is to say, genetically) determined. Social change, in other words, is possible only by virtue of biological characteristics of the human species, but the nature of the actual changes cannot be reduced to these species traits.

## 11.1 Evolutionary Theories

Evolutionary theories of social change are conglomeration of many but **interrelated** theories of change. The main notion of the evolutionary theory of change is that there is a consistent **direction** of social change of **all** societies in a similar sequence of stages from the original to the final stage of development, or from a simple and 'primitive' to the more complex and advanced state. Evolutionary theory also implies that evolutionary change will culminate at reaching the final stage of development. Evolutionary theorists consider change as progress and growth. The theory can be classified into two **main categories**- (a) Classical evolutionary theories (b) Neo-evolutionary theories.

### 1. Classical Evolutionary Theories

The classical evolutionary theories have been developed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists and sociologists. Although, approaches differ among them, **there** is an underlying principle of convergence of ideas that evolutionary change takes place in a **unilinear** and similar direction. They largely draw an analogy of the progress of animal life from the simple **uni-celled** organisms to the most complex **animal** – the human being. They believe that as societies evolve and **grow**, the functions of its members would also become more specialized just as the development of millions of body cells to perform specific functions within an interrelated system. The main proponents of the classical theories of evolutionary change include August Comte. We shall consider some of the frameworks of classification of human evolution developed by these classical evolutionists.

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August Comte (1798-1857), a French scholar, and founder of Sociology, propounded that all societies passed through three stages of growth: (i) the **theological stage** (dominated by the guidance and principles of spiritual wisdom); (ii) the **metaphysical stage** (a transitional stage where supernatural beliefs are replaced by abstract principles as socio-cultural guidelines), and (iii) the **positive, or scientific stage** (in which society is governed mainly by scientific laws).

Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), an English scholar, inspired by Darwin's theories of organic evolution, opined that human societies moved through a series of social evolutionary stages from smaller and simpler **structures** to larger and more complex structures. This theory was later known as 'Social Darwinism'. The idea of social evolution was well received and popular among the 19<sup>th</sup> century anthropological and sociological thinkers.

At about the same time, Lewis Henry Morgan a contemporary of E.B.Tylor, made great impact in America by contributing to the evolutionary schemes of thinking and **research** by engaging on the origin and development of family, marriage and kinship systems. He saw the development of human society in three broad stages based mainly on technological innovations: **savagery, barbarism and civilization**. The first two stages were divided into sub-stages which were denoted Lower, Middle and Upper. The last stage was marked by the emergence of invention of phonetic **alphabet** and writing.

## 2. Neo-evolutionary School

Evolutionary theories were revived in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by V.Gordon Childe, Julian Steward and Leslie White. Their formulations of evolutionary theories are characterized by careful scrutiny of evidence, systematic analysis, and rigorous reasoning. To distinguish them from the classical evolutionary theorists, they have also been labeled as neo-evolutionists.

**Marshall D. Sahlins** and **Elman Service** attempted a synthesis of the theories of evolution (particularly the theories of Julian Steward and Leslie White's) by developing the concept of 'specific' and 'general' evolution. The main claim of these theories was that evolution moved simultaneously in two directions in both the biological and cultural aspects. This evolutionary process then led to progress and made new ones emerge out of the old ones. They considered these two processes as interconnected in its totality. Thus, in the former stage, it took 'specific' biological and cultural processes and then continued to give effect in the progress of successive forms of evolution which were 'general' in nature for both the resultant aspects of evolution. While the former was classified in terms of the order of descent, the latter was done in terms of the levels of development or stages. For instance, specific evolution would imply development in local cultures and its sub-units or groups of cultures in a relatively shorter period while the general cultural evolution would mean the processes of successive forms of development such as the stages of hunting and gathering, agriculture, industrial revolution, atomic age, nuclear age, etcetera. This principle could be applied to other spheres of evolution such as religion, kinship structure and so on.

## 11.2 Cyclical Theories

Cyclical theories have been concerned with the repetitious change of conditions, events, forms **and/or** fashions over a long period of time, although the period of **recurrent** phases (cycles) of change would vary. The cyclical theorists believe that societies pass through a series of stages. However, they do not consider the notion of ending in a stage of perfection but see them as a return to the stage where it began for further round in a cyclical manner.

**A.L.Kroeber (1876-1960)**, a well-known American anthropologist, provides classical analysis of cyclical **patterns** of clothing-style changes of Western women. Kroeber found that clothing styles in Western societies followed certain patterns over long periods of time, and even within these patterns were observed changes in more or less regular cycles. Kroeber also discovered that the basic pattern of Western women's dress in the medieval and modern ages spanning about a thousand years has gone through a constant remodeling without any fundamental change. Kroeber found that the general pattern included a long skirt, a narrow waist, and a top with arms and breasts partially exposed. Periodically, within this general **form**, there is a cyclical change. Hemlines **rise** and fall, the waistline

moves up and down from just under the bust to the hips, and the amount of cleavage shown increases and decreases. Kroeber also discovered that women's dressing in the West repeat themselves over and over within cycles of about hundred years.

**Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968)**, a Russian-American sociologist, believed that all great **civilizations** pass **through** three cultural systems in a cyclical way: (i) the ideational cultural society based on faith and revelation; (ii) the idealist cultural society guided by a 'mixed' notion of supernatural beliefs and empiricism; and (iii) the sensate culture society, which are guided by empirical sense perceptions. He opined that all societies need not necessarily decay but rather they go through various stages by shifting from one cycle to another as the needs of the society demand.

### 11.3 Structural-Functional and Conflict Theories

The structural-functional and conflict theories are generally concerned with micro and middle range theories of social change. The structural-functionalists **assume** that society, like the human body, is a balanced system of institutions, each of which performs a function in maintaining society. They consider 'change' as a constant that requires no explanation. They hold that changes disrupt the equilibrium of a society, until the change has been integrated into the culture. Societies accept and adopt those changes that are found useful (functional), while they reject changes that are useless (dysfunctional). They opine that when events within and without the society disrupt the equilibrium, social institutions make adjustments to restore stability. For **instance**, a natural calamity, a famine, an influx of immigrants or a war may disrupt the social order and compel the social institutions to make adjustments.



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**Cultural lag** is one term that has been often used to describe the state of disequilibrium. When an event such as a natural calamity or a war causes a strain and trauma in a society, it takes sometime for the society to understand the strain and trauma and alter its values, attitudes, and institutions to adapt to the change. This is simply because societies need to adjust to maintain and restore to a state of stability just as the human body needs to adjust its functioning to adapt to changes. Like some of the cyclical theorists (e.g., **Pitirim Sorokin**), the structural-functionalists do not give importance to the result of social change as good or bad in so far as equilibrium is maintained in the society.

Karl Marx was one the great exponents of conflict theories. He looked at society as composition of oppositional **forces** – the oppressor and the oppressed. Such notion led him to predict the revolt of the masses. He saw conflict as the stage of development and progress that would lead to a higher order.

Karl Marx was the first to introduce dialectical pattern of change to sociological analysis of change which concept had already been analyzed by the German philosopher **G.W.F.Hegel**. A dialectical pattern of change is neither linear nor cyclical. It assumes that new social forms emerge out of the old social forms through opposition and conflict. Karl Marx and his followers propound that a social form (the thesis) gives rise to new social **form** (the synthesis) due to oppositional forces and conflict (the anti-thesis) within the existing old social form. It would mean that thesis generates anti-thesis, and anti-thesis generates synthesis, and again synthesis would give rise to a new anti-thesis, which in turn generates a new synthesis and the alternate process goes on.

### 11.4 Synthesis of Social Change Theories

Most theorists today integrate the various ideas and theories of social change that have been **discussed** above. There are very few theorists that still hold on their own ideas and theories. There are also not many theorists which believe that **social change always results in improvement or that societies inevitably decay**. There is a general agreement, however, that **societies change because of various**

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factors conditioned on the society. These factors could be both within and without the society **and/or** planned and unplanned. Many theorists do believe that changes in societies are not necessarily good or bad. They opine that although a stable society is usually better than a chaotic and conflict-ridden society, stability would sometimes imply exploitation, oppression and injustice.

### 11.5 Linear Theory

Change is cumulative, nonrepetitive, developmental, usually permanent (Tonnie's theory of change from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*); 2 or more stages; view broad historical pattern of change in human societies as involving transition from small, undifferentiated societies with homogeneous culture to large societies with high degree of structural differentiation and heterogeneous culture.

- Lenski's macro stage theory or historical development of human societies: caused by innovations in the technology of economic production that produced ever larger surplus of material resources
- hunting and gathering
- pastoral and horticultural
- agricultural
- industrial
- Urbanization: involves ancient process of interaction between cities and surrounding countryside; cities have 3 distinct characteristics of a marketplace (economic production), of a centre of political and administrative authority (political power) and of urban community (community conflict);
- ancient and medieval cities: community conflict dealt with peasant tax and rent revolts in countryside, competing elite groups and dynasties
- commercial cities: community conflict dealt with import-export taxes on trade, competition between merchant families, wages & working conditions for craft workers and seamen,
- industrial cities: community conflict from disadvantaged US farmers, urban factory workers and industrialists
- corporate cities: decentralized industrial production and more service-based economy, postwar 1950's; community conflict and popular protest was about the urban community itself, about issues to do with urban decline, i.e. slums, poverty, jobs, housing, crime and racial discrimination
- world cities: global economy, international banking & trade, recent decades; community conflict deals with old residents and newer immigrant communities, disparities in taxes and municipal services between political jurisdictions, foreign investment and capital flight.

### 11.6 Mechanisms of Social Change

Causal explanations of social change are limited in scope, especially when the subject of study involves initial conditions or basic processes. A more general and theoretical way of explaining social change is to construct a model of recurring mechanisms of social change. Such mechanisms, incorporated in different theoretical models, include the following.

#### **Mechanisms of one-directional change: accumulation, selection, and differentiation**

Some evolutionary theories stress the essentially cumulative nature of human knowledge. Because human beings are innovative, they add to existing knowledge, replacing less adequate ideas and practices with better ones. As they learn from mistakes, they select new ideas and practices through a trial-and-error process (sometimes compared to the process of natural selection). According to this theory, the expansion of collective knowledge and capabilities beyond a certain limit is possible only by specialization and differentiation. Growth of technical knowledge stimulates capital accumulation, which leads to rising production levels. Population growth also may be incorporated in this model of cumulative evolution: it is by the accumulation of collective technical knowledge and means of

production that human beings can increase their numbers; this growth then leads to new problems, which are solved by succeeding innovation.

### **Mechanisms of curvilinear and cyclic change: saturation and exhaustion**

Models of one-directional change assume that change in a certain direction induces further change in the same direction; models of curvilinear or cyclic change, on the other hand, assume that change in a certain direction creates the conditions for change in another (perhaps even the opposite) direction. More specifically, it is often assumed that growth has its limits and that in approaching these limits the change curve will inevitably be bent. Ecological conditions such as the availability of natural resources, for instance, can limit population, economic, and organizational growth.

Shorter-term cyclic changes are explained by comparable mechanisms. Some theories of the business cycle, for example, assume that the economy is saturated periodically with capital goods; investments become less necessary and less profitable, the rate of investments diminishes, and this downward trend results in a recession. After a period of time, however, essential capital goods will have to be replaced; investments are pushed up again, and a phase of economic expansion begins.

Cyclical theories of social change focus on the rise and fall of civilisations attempting to discover and account for these patterns of growth and decay" – (Ian Robertson). Spengler, Toynbee and Sorokin can be regarded as the Champions of this theory. Their ideas may be briefed here.

#### **1. Spengler: 'The Destiny of Civilisations'**

Oswald Spengler, a German school teacher, in his book "The Decline of the West"-1918, pointed out that the fate of civilisations was a matter of "destiny". Each civilisation is like a biological organism and has a similar life-cycle; birth, maturity old age and death.

After making a study of eight major civilisations, including the West, he said that the modern Western Society is in the last stage, i.e. old age. He concluded that the Western Societies were entering a period of decay – as evidenced by wars, conflicts, and social breakdown that heralded their doom.

This theory is almost out of fashion today. His idea of 'destiny' is hardly an adequate explanation of social change. His biological analogy is also too unrealistic and his work is too mystical and speculative.

#### **2. Toynbee: 'Challenge and Response'**

Arnold Toynbee, a British historian with enough sociological insight has offered a somewhat more promising a theory of social change. His famous book "A Study of History"-1946, a multivolume work, draws on materials from 24 civilisations.

The key – concepts in Toynbee's theory are those of "challenge and response". "Every society faces challenges-at first, challenges posed by the environment; later challenges from internal and external enemies.

The nature of the responses determines the society's fate. The achievements of a civilisation consist of its successful responses to challenges; if it cannot mount an effective response, it dies".-(Ian Robertson).

Toynbee's views are more optimistic than those of Spengler's, for he does not believe that all civilisations will inevitably decay. He has pointed out that history is a series of cycles of decay and growth. But each new civilisation is able to learn from the mistakes and tomorrow from cultures of others.

It is, therefore, possible for each new cycle to offer higher levels of achievement. Still he has not explained why some societies are able to offer effective responses to their challenges while others do not, or why a society should overcome one challenge but become a victim of another.

#### **3. Sorokin: 'Sensate' and 'Ideational' Culture:**

The Russian-American sociologist, Pitirim A Sorokin, in his book "Social and Culture Dynamics"-1938, has offered another explanation of social change. His work has had a more lasting impact on sociological thinking. Instead of viewing civilisations into terms of development and decline



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he proposed that they alternate or fluctuate between two cultural extremes: The “sensate” and the “ideational”.

The sensate culture stresses those things which can be perceived directly by the senses. It is practical, hedonistic, sensual, and materialistic. Ideational Culture emphasises those things which can be perceived only by the mind. It is abstract, religious, concerned with faith and ultimate truth. It is the opposite of the sensate culture. Both represent ‘pure’ types of culture.

Hence no society ever fully conforms to either type. Without mentioning the causes, he said that as the culture of a society develops towards one pure type, it is countered by the opposing cultural force. Cultural development is then reversed moving towards the opposite type of culture.

In brief, too much emphasis on one type of culture leads to a reaction towards the other. “Societies contain both these impulses in varying degrees and the tension between them creates long-term instability”. Between these types, of course, there lies 9 third type ‘ideastic’ cultures. This is a happy and a desirable blend of the other two, but no society ever seems to have achieved it as a stable condition.

Sorokin’s theory has not been accepted by the sociologists for it portrays his prejudices and probably his disgust with the modern society. His concepts of ‘sensate’ and ‘ideational’ are purely subjective. His theory is in a way speculative and descriptive. It does not provide an explanation as to why social change should take this form. Thus, the cyclical theories, in general are not satisfactory.

**Self-Assessment**

**1. Answer the following questions:**

- (i) Sociology helps us to:
  - (a) understand the complex set of social change in the society.
  - (b) resist social change.
  - (c) promote social change in the society.
- (ii) Evolutionary theories view **social** change as:
  - (a) decay (b) progress
  - (c) anti-society
- (iii) Cyclical theories assume that society:
  - (a) passes through one stage. (b) passes through a series of stages.
  - (c) passes through no stage.
- (iv) Structural-functional theories believe that society is a balanced system of institutions. (Tick the correct answer) Yes / No
- (v) What is social change? Answer in about two lines.

**11.7 Summary**

- Social change is a universal phenomenon that takes place in our lives. Social change is **generally understood** as the process of **occurrence** of **significant** alterations in the organization **and/or** structure and functions of social life. Social **transformation** is considered as a form of social change that occurs in a radical and abrupt **mannera**.
- There **are** various approaches for understanding social change. Evolutionary theories hold the view that all societies pass through a similar sequence of developmental stages until it culminates in some final stage. They see social change as progress and growth that is good for the society. Cyclical theories assume that societies pass through a cycle of changes-grow, reach a peak of development and then decay- and **repeats** the cycle again the same pattern.
- Structural-functional theories view that there is stability and order in the society, but changes do occur occasionally. Conflict theorists believe that conflict **occasionally** arise in societies to correct adverse social developments which outcome would be better than the old systems.

- Social change is caused by various factors—biological (non-human and human), geographic, technological, and **socio-cultural** factors. We also find variant rates of social change depending on various conditions and situations. Sociologists are also concerned about the various impacts of change on human society.

### 11.8 Key-Words

1. Assimilation : a perceptual process in which a message which is actually close to a listener's own attitude (in the latitude of acceptance) is misperceived as closer to the attitude than it really is
2. Contrast : a perceptual process in which a message which is far away from a listener's own attitude (in the latitude of rejection) is misperceived as further from the attitude than it really is
3. Curvilinear : a relationship that is not a simple, straight line; increases in the size of one variable (discrepancy) first create increases in another variable (persuasion), but further increases in the first variable cause decreases in the other variable\*
4. Discrepancy : the amount of difference between a message and a listener's own attitude
5. Involvement : the extent to which a topic is relevant, important, or salient to an listener

### 11.9 Review Questions

1. Discuss cyclical theory.
2. Explain the various theories of social change.
3. What do you mean by the mechanisms of social change? Explain.

#### Answers: Self-Assessment

1. (i) (a)                      (ii) (b)                      (iii) (c)                      (iv) Yes  
(v) Social change occurs when the style of living of a community undergoes modification for better or worse. It is a term used to indicate that the **pattern** of culture has evolved to another stage.

### 11.10 Further Readings



Books

1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 12: Processes of Change

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Discuss the Concept of Sanskritization
- Explain Westernization
- Know about Secularization
- Understand Globalisation and Impact of Globalisation

### Introduction

When we try to analyse the processes of change in Indian society - both rural and urban - we find that the processes of Sanskritization, Westernization/Modernization and Secularization and Democratization serve as important tools and concepts for this purpose.

The concepts of 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' were developed by M.N. Srinivas in 1952 in the analysis of the social and religious life of the Coorgs of South India. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, caste was studied either in terms of the *varna* model or in terms of status based on notions of heredity and pollution and purity. Srinivas analyzed the caste system in terms of upward mobility. He maintained that the caste system is not a rigid system in which the position of each caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible. A low caste was able to rise, in a generation or two, to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism. It took over rituals, customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins and gave up some of their own considered to be impure. The adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been possible, though theoretically forbidden (1985:42).

The occupations practised by castes, their diet, and the customs they observe determine their status in the hierarchy. Thus, practising an occupation such as tanning, butchery, or handling toddy puts a caste in a low position. Eating beef, fish and mutton is considered defiling. Offering animal sacrifices to deities is viewed a low practice than offering fruit and flowers. As such, castes following these customs, diet habits, etc. adopt the life of the Brahmins to achieve a higher status in the caste hierarchy. This is moving of a low caste upwards in the social structure. Srinivas termed this process as 'Sanskritization'.

## 12.1 Sanskritization

### Notes

Srinivas has defined 'Sanskritization' as a process by which the low castes take over the beliefs, rituals, style of life, and other cultural traits from those of the upper castes, specially the Brahmins. In fact, Srinivas has been broadening his definition of Sanskritization from time to time. Initially, he described it as "the process of mobility of lower castes by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism to move in the caste hierarchy in a generation or two (1962: 42). Later on, he redefined it as "a process by which a low caste or a tribe or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high twice-born caste" (1966: 6). The second connotation of Sanskritization is thus much broader because first Srinivas talked of imitation of mere food habits, rituals and religious practices but later on he talked of imitation of ideologies too (which include ideas of *karma*, *dharma*, *pap*, *punya*, *moksha*, etc.)

In the process of imitation of customs and habits of high castes or Brahmins by the low castes, sometimes even when the low castes followed some such practices which according to the present rational standards are considered to be good and functional, they discard such customs and in their place adopt those ideas and values of Brahmins which according to the present standards are considered degrading and dysfunctional. Srinivas has given some such examples from his study in Mysore. Low castes are liberal in the spheres of marriage, sex, and attitudes towards women. They permit divorce, widow remarriage, and post-puberty marriage. But Brahmins practise prepuberty marriage, regard marriage indissoluble, restrict widow from remarrying and expect her to shave her head and shed all jewellery and ostentation in clothes. They prefer virginity in brides, chastity in wives, and continence and self-restraint in widows. But as a low caste rises in the hierarchy and its ways become more sanskritized, it adopts the sex and marriage code of the Brahmins. Sanskritization results in harshness towards women. Another example of taking up irrational practice is that a Brahmin and a high caste Hindu wife is enjoined to treat her husband as a deity. A wife is expected to take her meal after the husband had perform a number of *vratas* (religious fasts) to secure a long life for husband, regard the importance of having sons a religious necessity, and so forth. Sanskritization involved taking up all such beliefs and practices by the lower castes. These examples thus point out that Sanskritization is nothing but a blind and irrational imitation of the customs, practices, habits, and values of higher castes, specially Brahmins.

Could it be said that the process of de-Sanskritization is also possible? Srinivas has conferred that "it is not inconceivable that occasionally the de-Sanskritization of the imitating castes may take place".

### Sanskritization and Brahmanization

Srinivas (1985: 42-43) preferred the term 'Sanskritization' to 'Brahmanization' because of several reasons: (1) Sanskritization is a broader term while Brahmanization is a narrower term. In fact, Brahmanization is subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritization. For instance, the Brahmins of the Vedic period consumed alcohol (*soma*), ate beef, and offered animal sacrifices. But these practices were given up by them in the post-Vedic times, perhaps under the influence of Jainism and Buddhism. Today, by and large, Brahmins are vegetarians and teetotalers; only the Kashmiri, Bengali and Saraswat Brahmins eat non-vegetarian food. Had the term 'Brahmanization' been used, it would have been necessary to specify which particular Brahmin group was meant. (2) The reference group or the agents of Sanskritization are not always Brahmins. In fact, it were Brahmins who, entrusted with the authority to declare laws, had prohibited members of other castes in following the customs and rites of Brahmins. But such prohibitions did not prevent the lower castes in sanskritizing their customs and rites. Srinivas has given the example of low castes in Mysore (South India) who adopted the way of life of Lingayats; who are not Brahmins but who claim equality with Brahmins. The smiths of South India, call themselves Vishwakarma Brahmins, wear the sacred thread and have sanskritized their rituals. However, some of them still eat meat and take alcohol because of which many castes, including some untouchable castes, do not accept food or water from their hands (1985: 43). Thus, since the low castes imitated Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, Jats, etc., in different regions of the country, the term 'Brahmanization' was not considered adequate enough for explaining the process of cultural and social mobility.

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### Features of Sanskritization

A few facts are worth noting in the process of Sanskritization:

1. The concept of Sanskritization has been integrated with economic and political domination, that is, the role of local 'dominant caste' in the process of cultural transmission has been stressed. Though for some time, the lower castes imitated Brahmins but soon the local dominant caste came to be imitated. And the locally dominant caste was often a non-Brahmin caste.
2. Sanskritization occurred sooner or later in those castes which enjoyed political and economic power but were not rated high in ritual ranking, that is, there was a gap between their ritual and politico-economic positions. This was because without Sanskritization, claim to a higher position was not fully effective. The three main axes of power in the caste system are the ritual, the economic and the political ones. The possession of power in any one sphere usually leads to the acquisition of power in the other two. But Srinivas mentions that inconsistencies do occur.
3. Economic betterment is not a necessary pre-condition to Sanskritization, nor economic development must necessarily lead to Sanskritization. However, sometimes a group (caste, tribe) may start by acquiring political power and this may lead to economic betterment and Sanskritization. Srinivas (1985: 57) has given the example of untouchables of Rampura village in Mysore who have got increasingly sanskritized though their economic condition has remained almost unchanged. Economic betterment, the acquisition of political power, education, leadership, and a desire to move up in the hierarchy, are all relevant factors in Sanskritization, and each case of Sanskritization may show all or some of these factors mixed up in different measures.
4. Sanskritization is a two-way process. Not only a caste 'took' from the caste higher to it but in turn it 'gave' something to the caste. We find Brahmins worshipping local deities which preside over epidemics, cattle, children's lives, and crops, besides the great gods of all India Hinduism. It is not unknown for a Brahmin to make a blood-sacrifice to one of these deities through the medium of a non-Brahmin friend (Srinivas, 1985: 60). Though local cultures seem to 'receive' more than they 'give', yet sanskritic Hinduism has also absorbed local and folk elements. The absorption is done in such a way that there is a continuity between the folk or little tradition and the great tradition.
5. Unit of mobility is group and not individual or family.
6. The British rule provided impetus to the process of Sanskritization but political independence has weakened the trend towards this change. The emphasis is now on the vertical mobility and not on the horizontal mobility.
7. Describing social change in India in terms of Sanskritization and Westernization is to describe it primarily in cultural and not in structural terms. Srinivas himself has conceded (1989: 55) that Sanskritization involves 'positional change' in the caste system without any structural change.
8. Sanskritization does not automatically result in the achievement of a higher status for the group. The group must be content to wait an indefinite period and during this period it must maintain a continuous pressure regarding its claim. A generation or two must pass usually before a claim begins to be accepted. In many cases, the claim of the caste may not be accepted even after a long time. Further, it is likely that a claim which may not succeed in a particular area or period of time may succeed in another.

The fact that Sanskritization may not help a lower caste to move up does not prevent it to discard the consumption of beef, change polluting occupation, stop drinking alcohol, and adopt some sanskritic customs, beliefs and deities. Thus, the process of Sanskritization may remain popular without achieving the goal of mobility.

### Factors Promoting Sanskritization

Factors that have made Sanskritization possible are industrialization, occupational mobility, developed communication, spread of literacy, and western technology. No wonder, the spread of Sanskrit theological ideas immersed under the British rule. The development of communications carried Sanskritization to areas previously inaccessible and the spread of literacy carried it to groups very low in the caste hierarchy. M.N. Srinivas has specifically referred to one factor which has helped the



spread of Sanskritization among the low castes. It is the separation of ritual acts from the accompanying *mantras* (citations) which facilitated the spread of Brahmanical rituals among all Hindu castes, including the untouchables. The restrictions imposed by the Brahmins on the non-twice-born castes banned only the chanting of *mantras* from the Vedas. Thus, the low caste people could adopt the social practices of the Brahmins. This made Sanskritization feasible.

The political institution of parliamentary democracy has also contributed to the increased Sanskritization, according to Srinivas (1985: 49). Prohibition, a sanskritic value, has been mentioned in the Constitution of India. Some states have introduced it wholly or partially.

## **12.2 Westernization**

Westernization refers to “the changes in technology, institutions, ideology and values of a non-western society as a result of cultural contact with the western society for a long period” (Srinivas, 1962: 55). Giving an example of Indian society, the technological changes, establishment of educational institutions, rise of nationalism and new political culture, etc. may all be described as the by-products of westernization or of the British rule of two hundred years in India. Thus, by Westernization, Srinivas primarily meant the British impact.

The important features of Westernization are: (1) Emphasis on technology and rationalism. (2) This process (of Westernization) is not retarded by the process of Sanskritization, but to some extent it is accelerated by it. Srinivas had earlier maintained that Sanskritization is a prelude to Westernization. However, later on, he changed his view and maintained that it is not necessary for Sanskritization occurring prior to Westernization (1985: 60). But the two processes are linked with each other. It may not be possible to understand one without the other. Harold Gould has also said that for Brahmins and other higher castes, sanskritizing is an attempt to maintain the distance between them and the lower castes who are sanskritizing. Thus, the Brahmins are, in a sense, running away from the lower groups who are trying to catch up with them.

The form and pace of Westernization of India varied from region to region and from one section of population to another (Srinivas, 1985: 51). For instance, one group of people became westernized in their dress, diet, manners, speech, sports and in the gadgets they used while another absorbed western science, knowledge and literature, remaining relatively free from Westernization in externals. For example, Brahmins accepted the dress and appearance (tuff giving way to cropped hair), sending their children to westernized schools, using gadgets like radio, car, etc., but they did not accept the British diet, dancing, hunting, and freedom from pollution. This distinction is, however, only of relative emphasis. It is not a clear-cut distinction.

Srinivas prefers the term ‘Westernization’ to ‘Modernization’ (whereas Daniel Lerner, Harold Gould, Milton Singer, and Yogendra Singh prefer ‘Modernization’ in place of ‘Westernization’). He considers the later term as subjective and the former term as more objective (*Seminar*, 88, 1986: 2). The called ‘rationality of goals’ in modernization could not be taken for granted because human goals are based on value preferences. As such, rationality could only be predicted of the means and not of the ends of social action.

### **Scholars’ Support to the Concepts**

Scholars like Bernard Cohn and Milton Singer have supported the validity of the concept of Sanskritization on the basis of their empirical studies. Cohn had studied a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh in 1950s. This village consisted of two main castes – a dominant caste of Thakurs and a large untouchable caste of Chamars. The landless Chamars had tended to become sanskritized by adopting their landlord’s (Thakur’s) rituals at times of marriage and birth through education obtained in the local schools and through a rise in their income. On the other hand, many Thakurs had migrated to cities and became industrial workers, clerks and teachers, taking on in their dress and manner and in their religious outlook, what may be called a more westernized form of Hinduism. Thus, while upper caste was westernizing its style of life and religious beliefs, the lower caste was sanskritizing and assuming more traditional forms of ritual, practice and belief.

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Singer (1967:66) on the basis of his study of leading industrialists in the city of Madras found a different process of change (what he calls 'compartmentalization') in the style of life and religious beliefs of lower and upper castes (as different from Srinivas's process of Sanskritization and Westernization). He found that there was a decline of fear of ritual pollution both in the office and factory. For example, different castes mixed freely in the factories, they ate at the same cafeterias, travelled in the same buses, and attended political rallies freely with one another. Brahmins and upper castes had even taken to work considered highly polluting, for example, the tanning of skins and hides. Singer called it the process of 'compartmentalization'. There was no conflict in the work of upper castes in industry and their obligations as good Hindus. The two (factory situation and home situation) were separate spheres and had different standards of conduct and behaviour. For example, they used western dress, spoke English, and followed western customs in the factory, while at home they used Indian dress, spoke the local language and conducted themselves as good Hindus. This is what Singer called 'compartmentalization'.

But Singer's view does not give any new explanation. Individual's behaviour varies from situation to situation is a known fact. This does not mean that there is compartmentalization. In fact, there is a continuity. Even Cohn feels that compartmentalization in Indian society is not different from continuity in the society. However, it can be accepted that in this continuity, there is conservative persistence of tradition. It is an active, dynamic continuity. And Singer accepts this fact (1967: 68). People adapt to new conditions.

### Perception of the Concepts

The process of Sanskritization indicates:

1. a process of change;
2. upward mobility or aspirations of lower castes to move upward in hierarchy; and
3. attack on hierarchy and levelling of culture.

As regards attack on hierarchy, it is not only the lower castes but even the tribes and castes in the middle regions of the hierarchy which try to take over the customs and way of life of the higher castes. Thus, Brahmanical customs and way of life spread among all Hindus. Could this be called attack on hierarchy and levelling of culture? Harold Gould (1961: 965) has described it not as a process of cultural imitation *per se* but an expression of challenge and revolt against the socio-economic deprivations. Some scholars hold that it was an attack on hierarchy but it did not succeed in levelling of culture.

As regards the upward mobility, Yogendra Singh calls it 'contextual specific' connotation of Sanskritization. This is because it explains the process of cultural imitation by lower castes of upper castes, which could be Rajputs, Jats, Brahmins, Baniyas, etc. In some places, tribes are reported to imitate the customs of the caste Hindus.

Lastly, as regards merely 'the process of change', Yogendra Singh calls it the 'historical specific' connotation of Sanskritization. In this sense, it refers to the process in the Indian history which led to changes in the status of various castes or its cultural patterns in different periods of history. It is also indicative of an endogenous source of social change.

### Usefulness of the Concepts in Understanding Social Change

The usefulness of the concept of Sanskritization as a tool in the analysis of Indian society has been described by Srinivas himself as "greatly limited because of the complexity of the concept as well as its looseness" (*Ibid*, 1985: 44). We may also point out certain deficiencies in the concept:

1. Since the reference group is not always a Brahmin caste but in many cases it is the local 'dominant caste' (which could be a Rajput, Bania, Jat, etc.), the context of Sanskritization varies not only in each model (that is, Brahmin model, Rajput model, Bania model, etc.) but also within the same model from region to region. According to Yogendra Singh (1973: 8), this introduces contradictions in various 'contextual specific' connotations of Sanskritization.

2. Power and dominance have been integrated by Srinivas with the process of Sanskritization. This introduces the structural element in the Sanskritization model of social change. Srinivas has not made this explicit. He has maintained that many lower castes in the past ascended to higher positions and became dominant castes either through royal decrees or through usurping the power. This means that without going through the process of Sanskritization too, lower castes can rise in the social scale through structural changes, that is, through conflicts and war, through rise and fall of power, or through political stratagems.
3. The concepts of Sanskritization and Westernization primarily analyze social change in cultural and not in structural terms. Sanskritization involves 'positional change' in the caste system without any structural modification.
4. Zetterberg (1965: 40) is of the opinion that Srinivas's two concepts are 'truth asserting' concepts. This connotation is often vague. Srinivas himself has said that Sanskritization is an extremely complex and heterogeneous concept. It would be more profitable to treat it as a bundle of concepts than as a single concept. It is only name for a widespread cultural process.
5. Srinivas's model explains the process of social change only in India which is based on the caste system. It is not useful for other societies.
6. These concepts do not lead to a consistent theory of cultural change. Even their nominal definitions are devoid of theory. Zetterberg (1965: 40) has said that these two concepts can be appropriate or inappropriate, effective or worthless, but never false or true.
7. Harper treats this concept as a *functional* concept distinct from a *historical* concept of change.
8. Yogendra Singh maintains (1973: 11) that Sanskritization fails to account for many aspects of cultural changes in the past and contemporary India as it neglects the non-sanskritic traditions, which often are a localized form of the sanskritic tradition. McKim Marriott (1955: 196-97) also found such phenomenon in his study of a village community in India.
9. In some parts of the country (like Punjab and former Sind), what was imitated by castes was not sanskritic tradition but the Islamic tradition. In Punjab, Sikhism emerged as synthesis of the Hindu tradition with the Islamic movements of Sufism and mysticism.

All this points out that the two concepts developed by Srinivas indicate only the limited and not the complete change in India.

### 12.3 Modernization

Modernization has many dimensions. It may be perceived at society level, group level, or individual level. It may also be perceived as economic modernization, political modernization, social modernization, technological modernization, military modernization, police modernization, educational modernization, administrative modernization, and so forth. The concept has thus been employed in a diffused manner.

Economists perceive modernization in terms of man's application of technologies to the control of nature's resources in order to bring about a marked increase in the output per individual in the society. Sociologists examine it in terms of differentiation in the quality of life that characterizes the modern societies. They explore new structures created to perform new functions, or new functions assigned to old structures. They also study the dysfunctional consequences of the modernization process like mental illness, violence, social unrest, regionalism and parochialism, and caste and class conflicts, etc. Political scientists focus on the problems of nation and government building as modernization occurs. They also remain concerned with the ways in which political elite respond to the efforts of new participants in politics to share power and to make demands upon those who monopolize power (Myron Weiner, 1966: 3).

According to Eisenstadt (1969: 1), modernization is the most over-whelming feature of the contemporary scene, in the sense that most nations are nowadays caught in its web. The characteristics and the processes of modernization in different countries are in some respect common and in some respect different. Historically, modernization (as the process of change in social, economic and political systems) has developed from a great variety of different traditional societies in different regions of

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the world. In western Europe, societies developed from feudal states, in eastern Europe from more autocratic states, in the United States, Canada and Australia through the processes of colonization and immigration, in Latin America from oligarchic conquest-colonial societies, in Japan from a centralized feudal state, in China from the breakdown of the most continuous imperial system, in most Asian and African societies from within colonial frameworks, in some societies (specially in Asia) from more centralized monarchical societies, and in some from tribal structures and traditions. Eisenstadt submits that the different starting points of the process of modernization of these societies have greatly influenced the specific contours of their development and the problems encountered in the course of it.

The ambiguity and diffuseness of the concept of modernization has resulted in identifying modernization with different forms/ types of social change, like westernization, industrialization, progress, development, and so forth. Besides this, emphasis has come to be led on particular aspects as the essential cores of modernization. It is, therefore, essential that the term 'modernization' may be defined precisely and objectively.

### The Concept

Modernization is not a philosophy or a movement with a clearly articulated value-system. It is a process of change (Gore, 1982: 7). Earlier, the term 'modernization' was used to refer only to "change in economy and its related effect on social values and social practices". It was described as a process that changed the society from primarily agricultural to primarily industrial economy. As a consequence of this change in economy, the society simultaneously underwent changes in values, beliefs and norms (Gore, *Ibid*: 7). Today, the term 'modernization' is given a broader meaning. It is described as "social change involving the elements of science and technology." It involves change based on rationality. According to Alatas (1972: 22), modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced in the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and more satisfactory life in the broadest sense of the term, as accepted by the society concerned. In this definition, the phrase 'modern scientific knowledge' involves: (i) the recourse to experimentation to assess the validity of suggested explanations, (ii) the assumption of laws explainable in terms of a rational and experimental approach as distinct from religious dogma and philosophical explanation, (iii) the employment of definite methods in ascertaining the validity of facts, (iv) the use of concepts and signs, and (v) the search for truth for its own sake.

According to Eisenstadt (1969: 2), modernization refers to both (a) structural aspects of social organization, and (b) socio-demographic aspects of societies. Karl Deutsch (*American Political Science Review*, September 1961: 494-95) has coined the term 'social mobilization' to denote most of the socio-demographic aspects of modernization. He has defined social mobilization as "the process in which major clusters of old social, economic and psychological commitments are eroded and broken and people become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour".

Rustow and Ward (1964) have maintained that the basic process in modernization is the application of modern science to human affairs. According to Pye (1969: 329) modernization is the development of an inquiring and inventive attitude of mind, individual and social, that lies behind the use of techniques and machines and inspires new forms of social relations. Scholars like Toynbee (1962: 24) feel that there is no difference between modernization and westernization. He writes that the agreeable word 'modern' is a substitute for the less agreeable word 'western'. The motive for using the word 'modern' instead of 'western' for the introduction of science and democracy is merely to save face, because it goes against the grain to admit that one's own ancestral way of life is not adequate to the situation in which one now finds oneself. But such views have been described as totally biased and unjustified.

Modernization is also not to be confused with industrialization. Industrialization refers to changes in methods of production, and economic and social organization resulting from the introduction of power-driven machinery and the consequent rise of the factory system. According to Theodorson (1969: 201), it (industrialization) is characterized by: (i) the replacement of hand production centered in a craftsman's home or small shop by machine production centered in factories, (ii) by the production of standardized goods with interchangeable parts, (iii) by the rise of a class of factory workers who

work for wages and do not own the means of production or the goods they produce, (iv) by a great increase in the proportion of the population engaged in non-agricultural occupations, and (v) by the growth of numerous large cities. Industrialization provides a vast quantity of material goods never before available to the majority of the population. Modernization, on the other hand, is a long process with the end result being a scientific attitude of mind.

An analysis of the modernization process has been divided into three aspects by James O' Connell (1965: 554): (i) *inventive outlook*, that is, the scientific spirit for a continuing, systematic and inventive search for knowledge pertaining to the cause and effect of the phenomenon, (ii) *invention of new tools and techniques*, that is, search for varied inquiry methods that facilitate research and finding out new machines that make a different pattern of life necessary. The conviction of explanation given by the modern science makes religious rituals in-nocuous and unnecessary, and (iii) *flexibility of social structures and continuing identity*, that is, a willingness to accept continuous change on the plane of both individual and social structures together with a capacity to preserve individual and social identity. For example, in the polygynous traditional society, the marital customs were centered around the older men, but with the introduction of the wage system and labour mobility, the economic achievement of the younger men enabled them to compete for wives.

The changes that occur with the transition from a traditional to a modern society, according to James O' Conell (1965: 549) are:

- Economic growth increases and it becomes self-sustaining.
- Occupations become more skilled and specialized.
- Number of people engaged in primary occupations reduces while that of people engaged in secondary and tertiary occupations increases.
- Age-old agricultural implements and methods give way to use of tractors, fertilizers, etc.
- Barter system is replaced by the money system.
- An interdependence comes into being between communities that previously were separated from and independent of one another.
- The process of urbanization increases.
- Ascriptive status gives way to achieved status.
- Equality gradually replaces hierarchy.
- With better medical care and improved health, the longevity of life or survival rate increases.
- Geographical distances are shortened with the use of new methods of transport and communication.
- Hereditary leadership gives way to elected leadership.

In this connection, it is necessary to understand the terms *tradition*, *traditionalism*, and *traditional society*. 'Tradition' refers to the beliefs and practices handed down from the past. 'Traditionalism' is the psychic attitude that glorifies past beliefs and practices as immutable (which cannot be changed). It is antithetical to change and development. Traditionalists see tradition as static. They urge that the traditional values and practices have to be adopted and preserved because they were found useful in the past. They are thus hostile to innovations that violate previous practices.

According to Edward Shils Is ("Tradition and Liberty" in *Ethics*, 1965: 160-161), tradition or traditionalistically-oriented action is a "self-conscious deliberate affirmation of traditional norms, in full awareness of their traditional nature." The traditional norms derive their merit from a sacred origin. If traditional norms are believed related to a sacred object in the past, these norms will be more opposed to alteration than if the norms were not grounded on some sacred object.

The traditionally transmitted norms are accepted because (i) their non-observance involves sanctions, (2) they fill the need to have rules in a given situation and thus perform a stabilizing function in society, (3) they have a sacred orientation, (4) they have been transmitted from the past, and (5) because of fear and ignorance also, people revere the past and resist change.



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A 'traditional society', according to R.N. Bellah (*Values and Social Change in Modern Japan*, 1961: 15) is characterized by the dominance of oral traditions, organization based on kinship, ascriptive status, and hierarchical social order. Contrary to this, a 'modern society' can be said to be characterized by machine technology, national and secular attitudes, and highly differentiated structures. In simple terms, it may be said that while the traditional society is custom-bound, hierarchical, ascriptive, and unproductive, a modern society is egalitarian, achievement-oriented and based on production-oriented economy.

A traditional society is an immobile society. In a society of high mobility, which is termed as 'open society', a person can change his position freely, utilizing his abilities, potentialities, and opportunities which come his way. On the other hand, in an immobile or 'closed society', an individual remains from birth to death in the same relative position. By 'modernization', we mean creation of an open society, or the extent of creation of new institutions and accepting change which takes place in institutions, ideas, and social structures of society. Shils has maintained that the traditional society is not by any means entirely traditional and modern society is by no means free of tradition.

### The Characteristics

Karl Deutsch (*Ibid*: 494-95) referring to one aspect of modernization (that is, socio-demographic aspect, or what he calls 'social mobilization') has indicated some of its indices as: exposure to modern life through machinery, response to mass media, urbanization, change from agricultural occupations, literacy, and growth of per capita income.

According to Eisenstadt (1969: 3), some of the indices, pertaining to the structural aspects of social organization (or modernization) are: specialized roles are 'free-floating' (that is, admission to them is not determined by ascribed properties of the individual), and wealth and power are not ascriptively allocated (as in traditional societies). This is associated with institutions like markets (in economic life) and voting and party activities in politics.

Moore (1961: 57-82) has suggested that a modern society has specific economic, political and cultural characteristics. In the economic sphere, a modern society is characterized by: (a) the development of a very high level of technology, fostered by the systematic application of knowledge, the pursuit of which became the province of the secondary (industrial, commercial) and tertiary (service) occupations, as against the primary (agricultural) ones; (b) growing specialization of economic roles; and (c) the growth of the scope and complexity of the major markets, the markets for goods, labour, and money.

In the political sphere, a modern society is in some sense democratic or at least populistic. It is characterized by: (a) the decline of traditional legitimation of the rulers with reference to powers outside their own society; (b) the establishment of some sort of ideological accountability of the rulers to the ruled, who are alleged to be the holders of the potential political power; (c) growing extension of the territorial scope of power of the central, legal, administrative and political agencies of the society; (d) continual spread of potential power to wider groups in the society-ultimately to all adult citizens and to moral orders; and (e) total disappearance or weakening of ascriptive political commitment to any given ruler or group.

In the cultural sphere, a modern society is characterized by: (a) a growing differentiation of the major elements of the major cultural and value systems, that is, religion, philosophy and science; (b) the spread of literacy and secular education; (c) a more complex institutional system for the advancement of specialized roles based on intellectual disciplines; (d) expansion of the media of communication; and (e) development of a new cultural outlook, characterized by an emphasis on progress and improvement, on happiness and expression of abilities, on individuality as a moral value and stress on dignity of the individual and on efficiency.

Broadly speaking, modernization has following important characteristics:

- a temper of science
- reason and rationalism
- secularism
- high aspirations and achievement orientation

- overall transformation of attitudes, norms and values
- creation of new functional institutions.
- investment in human resources
- a growth-oriented economy
- a national interest rather than kin, caste, religion, region or language-oriented interests
- an open society
- a mobile personality

## Measures of Modernization

Talking of the measures of modernization, Rustow and Ward (1964: 4) have included in it such specific aspects of change as: (i) industrialization of economy and adopting a scientific technology in industry, agriculture, dairy farming, etc. to make them highly productive; (ii) secularization of ideas; (iii) a marked increase in geographical and social mobility; (iv) a spread of scientific and technical education; (v) a transition from ascribed to achieved status; (vi) an increase in material standards of living; (vii) high ratio of inanimate to animate energy used in the economy; (viii) high proportion of working force employed in secondary and tertiary rather than primary production (that is, manufacturing and services as opposed to agriculture and fishing); (ix) high degree of urbanization; (x) high level of literacy; (xi) high national product per capita; (xii) free circulation of mass media; and (xiii) high expectancy of life at birth.

## Prerequisites of Modernization

Before the transition from traditionalism to modernization is made, certain prerequisites of social change and modernization must be present in the society. These are: (i) an awareness of purpose and an eye on the future; (ii) an awareness of existence, beyond one's own world, of many other societies; (iii) a sense of urgency; (iv) availability of variety of opportunities and roles; (v) an emotional preparedness for self-imposed tasks and sacrifices; and (vi) emergence of devoted, dynamic and committed leadership (Narmadeshwar Prasad, 1970: 19).

Modernization is critical because it requires not only a relatively stable new structure but one capable of adopting to continuously changing conditions and problems. Its success depends on the society's capacity for internal transformation.

Eisenstadt (1965: 659) has maintained that modernization requires three structural characteristics of a society: (i) (a high level of) structural differentiation, (ii) (a high level of) social mobilization, and (iii) a relatively centralized and autonomous institutional framework.

All societies do not accept the process of modernization uniformly. Following Herbert Blumer (1964: 129), five different ways may be pointed out in which a traditional society can respond to the process of modernization. These are:

### 1. Rejective Response

A traditional society may reject modernization. This may occur at different points in different ways. Powerful groups, landed aristocracy, a government oligarchy, a union of workers, and religious fanatics may discourage modernization to protect their vested interests. Social prejudices, special interests and firm attachment to given forms of traditional life, beliefs and customs may lead certain sets of people to reject the process of modernization and maintain the traditional order.

### 2. Disjunctive Response

This response of conjunction between the old and the new or the co-existence of traditionalism and modernity occurs when the modernization process operates as a detached development, without affecting much the traditional life. In this way, there is no conflict between modernization and the traditional order, because the older system is not threatened. Features of modernization exist alongside with the traditional life.

### 3. Assimilative Response

This response consists of an absorption of the modernization process by the traditional order without disruption of its own organization and pattern of life. The example is the acceptance of

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the computer ideology by the employees in the banking system, or use of fertilizers and tractors by the peasants in the villages. In both cases, the modernization process comes to be woven into the traditional order without endangering or affecting the basic characteristics of the traditional order.

**4. Supportive Response**

This response takes the form of accepting the new and modern things because they strengthen or reinforce the traditional order. For example, accepting the modernization process in the police or military systems because it increases the efficiency of the police or the power of the military. Different traditional groups and institutions use the opportunity presented by modernization to pursue more effectively traditional interests and to maintain traditional positions more firmly. Modernization may provide resources and facilities to further traditional interest.

**5. Disruptive Response**

In this response, the traditional order is undermined at many points by the adjustments which are made to the situation introduced by modernization.

Usually, all five of these responses take place at different points of the traditional order and in different combinations. The responses are governed by preferences, interests, and values.

According to Myron Weiner (1966: 8), the main instruments which make modernization possible are:

**1. Education**

It inculcates a sense of national loyalty and creates skills and attitudes essential for technological innovation. Edward Shils has also emphasized on the role of education in the process of modernization. Arnold Anderson, however, maintains that formal education is not adequate for teaching skills. Sometimes, university education may be a waste, for it increases the number of students with degrees without an increase in the number of people with modern skills and attitudes.

**2. Communication**

The development of mass communications (including telephone, TV, radio, movies, etc.) is an important means of spreading modern ideas at a faster rate. The only danger is that if these are controlled by the government, they will spread only one type of ideological thought. In democracies, however, the press is often independent to express its views.

**3. Ideology Based on Nationalism**

The nationalistic ideologies serve as unifying influence in bridging social cleavages within plural societies. They also help the political elite in changing the behaviour of masses of people. Binder, however, has pointed out that the elite may have modern ideology but it is not necessary that it may facilitate development also.

**4. Charismatic Leadership**

A charismatic leader is in a better position to persuade people to adopt modern beliefs, practices and behaviour patterns because of the respect and loyalty he commands. The danger is that the charismatic leader might use the modern values and attitudes as an instrument for personal glorification rather than national development.

**5. Coercive Governmental Authority**

If the government authority is weak, it may not succeed in implementing the policies aimed at the modernization process, but if the government is strong, it may even adopt coercive measures to compel people to accept attitudes and behaviour patterns which aim at development. Myron Weiner is, however, of the opinion that nationalism, under the aegis of an authoritarian regime, may lead a country into suicidal expansion abroad rather than development at home. In this connection, it may not be wrong to cite the example of the policies of the Bush regime (in America) political elite pertaining to countries like Iraq etc. After Russia lost its supremacy, America's governmental authority has started coercing the nations in the name of the process of modernizing the under-developed and the developing countries.

Myron Weiner (1966: 9-10) has also talked of opportunities and incentives along with value and attitude changes for the modernization of a society. Many economists have supported this viewpoint.

They point to the existence of institutional impediments to productive activities that retard the rate of investment. A few examples of such institutional impediments are land tenure systems that deny peasants the gain from increasing productivity, taxes that slow the flow of goods from one part of the country to another, and an elaborate bureaucratic regulations.

### Impact of the West and Modernization in India

The impact of the West on India, following Alatas (1972: 121), can be discussed in five phases. The first phase is that of hostile contact with the conquest of Alexander, etc., followed by contact of peaceful inter-change as the result of trade and commerce of successive centuries. The second phase began by the end of the fifteenth century when Vasco da Gama arrived with his ships at Calicut in 1498 A.D. Within a few years, the Portuguese occupied Goa. But the effect of these westerners was relatively restricted. The third phase began when East India Company established its rule in the beginning of the eighteenth century and later on the British rule was established in the country by the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the first step in the expansion of western culture in India. The fourth phase commenced with the beginning of the nineteenth century following the industrial revolution. With the economic exploitation of India by the British as source of raw materials, began the spread and dominance of western culture in social and cultural fields too. The fifth and the last phase began after the political independence of the country in 1947.

What has been the impact of the western culture on our society in terms of effect on our culture and our social systems? The impact may be briefly described as follows:

1. Western institutions like banking system, public administration, military organization, modern medicine, law, etc., were introduced in our country.
2. Western education broadened the outlook of the people who started talking of their rights and freedom. The introduction of the new values, the rational and secular spirit, and the ideologies of individualism, equality and justice assumed great importance.
3. Acceptance of scientific innovations raised the aspirations of raising the standard of living and providing material welfare for the people.
4. Many reform movements came into being. Several traditional beliefs and practices dysfunctional to society were discarded and many new behaviour patterns were imbibed.
5. Our technology, agriculture, entrepreneurship and industry were modernized leading to the economic well-being of our country.
6. The hierarchy of political values has been restructured. Accepting the democratic form of government, all native states who had been under a monarchic form of government have been merged into the Indian State and the authority and domination of feudals and zamindars has been demolished.
7. There have been structural changes in social institutions like marriage, family and caste, creating new forms of relations in social life, religion, etc.
8. The introduction of the modern means of communication, such as railway and bus travel, postal service, air and sea travel, press, and radio and television have affected man's life in varied respects.
9. There is rise in the feeling of nationalism.
10. The emergence of the middle class has changed the dominant values of the society.

The impact of western culture has also been described by Alatas in terms of four types of changes in our culture and social system: eliminative changes, additive changes, supportive changes and synthetic changes. The *eliminative* changes are those which cause the disappearance of culture traits, behaviour patterns, values, beliefs, institutions, etc. As an illustration, we can cite the example of total change in weapons used in fighting wars, abolition of *sati*, and so forth. The *additive* changes refer to the adoption of new culture traits, institutions, behaviour patterns and belief systems covering diverse aspects of life. These additions were not present earlier in the culture of people. Introducing divorce in the Hindu society, giving share to daughters in father's property, introducing election system in panchayats, etc. are a few examples of this type of change. The *supportive* changes are those which

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strengthen the values, beliefs or behaviour patterns present in society before contact with the West. A simple example of this change is the use of 'Hundi' system in loan transactions. The *synthetic* changes result in the creation of new forms from existing elements plus adopted ones. The most simple instance is the creation of residentially nuclear but functionally joint family which continues to fulfil social obligations to parents and siblings. Continuing dowry system but putting restrictions on amount to be given or taken, and associating children along with parents in mate selection are two other examples of synthetic change.

This categorization of changes due to western impact is only for the analytical purposes. In practice, it is not possible to isolate them from each other. Within one type of change, we may find elements of other types of changes too. For example, the introduction of the textile industry contains the supportive element in the sense that it facilitates the production of cloth. But at the same time, since it pushed back the traditional handloom and weaving industry, it may be said to have the element of eliminative change. Opening of the wall-less prisons in the prison system is another example of change having elements of three different types. So are the changes in the education system, banking system, family system, marriage system, and so forth.

The main question now is: Where has India reached after contact with the West? Has India progressed? Has it contributed to the welfare of the people? Is it possible to answer this question objectively? Can subjectivism and philosophical partiality be avoided in such analysis? Some intellectuals feel that India faced number of problems at the end of the Second World War, like the problems of economic backwardness and a large number of people living below the poverty line, unemployment, predominance of religion in all walks of life, rural indebtedness, caste conflicts, communal disharmony, shortage of capital, lack of trained personnel with technical skills, imperfect means for mobilizing human and material resources, and so forth. The western impact has provided alternative solutions to handle these problems. But other scholars hold that western impact has not helped India much in facing the problems. If some problems have been solved, many new have been created. And India is not trying to meet them through western models. It is using its indigenous elements in its approach. It was only after the independence of the country that there was a rise in industrial development, dissemination of education, rural development, control over population, and so forth. It was thus independence from western rule rather than contact with the West that made modernization possible.

The fact is that in certain areas of life, we may be justified in acclaiming the positive impact of the West. Modern medical science, modern technology, modern methods of combating natural catastrophes, modern methods of providing security from external dangers to the country, etc. will go down in Indian history as the incontestable contributions of the West. But India is using at the same time its traditional institutions, beliefs and practices for the uplift of the masses. Thus, even after the impact of the West, and after the modernization of various systems, India will remain India. Indian culture will subsist and survive in decades to come.

### Process of Modernization in India

The analysis in the preceding pages indicates that tradition and modernity constitute a continuum with tradition at one end and modernization at the other. Any society can be placed at any point on the continuum line. Most societies are in some form of transition.

Indian society at the time of independence had deep-rooted traditions but it also wanted to become modern. There were people as well as leaders who wanted a traditional way of life; there were others who wanted to see India emerge as a modern state having no truck with the past. There were yet others who were for some kind of compromise or synthesis between tradition and modernity. They said that a traditional system can accept and absorb modernization up to a certain point. In the same way, a modernized system can tolerate traditional views up to a certain degree. They, thus, wanted co-existence. But the propounders of the first two schools maintained that the co-existence cannot last long. A point is soon reached when the traditional ethos become irreconcilable. What process of change did we ultimately adopt?

We decided to modernize our society at various levels. What aspects of life were sought to be modernized and in what manner? At the social level, we wanted social relations to be based on concepts like equality and human dignity, and social values which would ensure social mobility,



removal of caste disabilities, amelioration of the condition of women, and so forth. At the economic level, we wanted technological growth and distributive justice. At the cultural level, we wanted secularism, rationalism, and liberalism. At the political level, we desired representative government, democratic institutions, achievement-oriented power structure, and a greater voice and participation for Indians in the governance of the country. The means or agents selected for modernizing the society (based on rationality and scientific knowledge) were: planning, education (which may dispel the darkness of ignorance), legislation, assistance from foreign countries, adopting policy of liberalization, and the like.

As regards the processes of modernization, broadly speaking, it may be said that from the qualitative point of view, modernization in India is undergoing the following processes:

At the *economic* structural level, there is a persistent and growing tendency to adopt the rational, mechanized industrial economy in place of older communal-familistic economy. This is even responsible for the breakdown of traditional systems like *jajmani* system.

At the *political* structural level, the change in the power structure is being introduced through the abolition of semi-feudal group-oriented power structure of the past and by replacing it by a rational parliamentary democratic structure of power which is essentially individual-oriented.

At the *cultural* level, the change in the realm of values is from sacred value system to secular value system.

At the *social* structural level, there is a decline in the traditional principle of ascribed status and role to achieved status and role.

Yogendra Singh (1973: x) is of the opinion that a unique feature of modernization in India is that it is being carried forward through adaptive changes in the traditional structures rather than structural dissociation or breakdown.

While it is true that most features of the traditional society cannot fit in with the modern society, modernity cannot be imposed upon the population. Modernization has to be professionally directed. The good features of traditional institutions can be retained by suitable adjustments in the process of development. A society is tension-free only when it is a closed and an immobile society. A developing society functions on the basis of built-in resistances and tensions. Tensions exist because of an inherent clash between tradition and modernity. Quite often, tensions are the legacies of the past, accentuated by economic development. Often in the process of development, some of the tensions are resolved. There is a dichotomous relationship between the forces of stability and conservation and the forces of change and modernization. A developing society faces these problems rather acutely. Challenges to change and modernization like regionalism, parochialism, illiteracy, migration, inflation, lack of capital, adjustment with neighbouring nations for reducing expenses on defence, political corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency and non-commitment, etc. have therefore to be faced patiently and methodically through rational adoptive processes. The break-up of a traditional society implies greater individual freedom, horizontalization of authority, more association of masses with decision-making, etc. The process of modernization involves clearing away social structure 'resistances'. Simultaneously, planning development at all levels—economic, social, political and cultural—alone will provide incentive to people to accept and share attitudes and norms of modernity and compel key social groups—the intelligentsia, political elite, bureaucrats and technicians—to accept the challenges of planned change.

### Problems of Modernization

Following are some of the problems of modernization:

1. The first paradox of modernization is that a modern society must change in all ways at once but such a regular, co-ordinated pattern of growth cannot be conceivably planned. A certain amount of social unrest is therefore inevitably created. For example, mass educational system demands that trained individuals must be absorbed in occupational roles commensurate with their training and knowledge. But it is not always possible to provide jobs to all the educated people. This leads to unrest among the educated unemployed.

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2. The second problem is that structural change is uneven during periods of modernization. For instance, industries may be modernized but family system, religious system, etc. remain conservative. These discontinuities and patterns of change affect the established social and other structures and produce lags and bottlenecks. Another example of this in India is that decreasing the age of voting from twenty-one to eighteen years might have been a step of entering into the modern era but it has created a crisis since a mass electorate rests on the assumption of a mature and literate electorate with a sense of citizenship and an ability to participate in the policy.
3. The third problem is that modernization of social and economic institutions creates conflicts with the traditional ways of life. For example, the trained doctors pose a threat to traditional medicine men. Similarly, the items produced by machinery deprive the domestic workers of their means of livelihood. At the same time, many people in the society with traditional and conservative values and attitudes become hostile to people who accept modern way of life. Thus, the conflict between the traditional and modern ways becomes a source of unrest.
4. The fourth problem is that most often roles adopted by the people are modern but values continue to be traditional. For example, even after taking training in medicine and surgery, a doctor tells his patient, "I treat, He cures". This indicates that he has no confidence in himself to diagnose the disease properly. But instead of blaming himself, he blames the way he is socialized to develop values in life.
5. The fifth problem is that there is lack of co-operation among agencies which modernize, and among institutions and systems which are modernized. This many-a-time leads to cultural lag as well as institutional conflicts.
6. The last problem is that modernization raises the aspirations of people but social systems fail to provide opportunities to them to achieve their aspirations. This creates frustrations, deprivations and social unrest.

### Modernization of Man

Modernization aims at achieving a decent standard of living for all people in the society. It also encompasses the idea of economic, social, political and cultural maturation. More than this, it requires the very transformation of the nature of man—a transformation which according to Alex Inkeles (1966: 158) is not a means to an end but the end itself of the development process.

But who is a modern man? How to identify him? A modern man is one who gives up the traditional ways of thinking and feeling, who has an open mind to accept new ideas, who is rational and secular, and who believes in equality, freedom and justice.

Referring to the external characteristics of a modern man as distinct from the internal characteristics, Alex Inkeles holds that a modern man is less likely to work as a farmer and is more likely to seek employment in a large and complex productive enterprise based on the intensive use of power and advanced technologies or in a big private or public concern which may give him a higher position and status in the society. He may prefer to live in a city where he may have access to all possible resources in a neighbourhood which may provide him transport, shopping, children's school, medical and postal etc. facilities within his reach, and in a house offering him some modern material comforts. He may prefer to become a member of clubs and organizations which provide him opportunities for expression, recognition and mobility. Being more exposed to mass communication, he may take interest in politics and in social development. Instead of living in a network of primary kin ties, he may prefer to be drawn into a much more impersonal milieu where he may come into contact with persons who may render him professional and other services and aid in times of distress. All these attributes in themselves do not constitute modernity but they are the attributes of man's life space that may impinge on the modern man. Although, man's exposure to modern setting may certainly contribute to the transformation of a traditional man, and although that setting may in turn require new values and behaviour patterns from him, but the internal characteristics of a modern man—his ways of thinking, feeling and acting— are more important to consider him truly modern. What are these internal traits of a modern man? Alex Inkeles (*Ibid*: 161-165) has identified some of these traits: (1) He should be ready for new experience and should be open to innovation and change. (2) He

should have a disposition to form or hold opinions over a large number of the problems and issues that arise not only in his immediate environment but also outside it. The more educated the individual, the greater is the readiness to offer opinions in response to this challenge. Contrary to this, a traditional man takes no interest in issues that surround and touch him. Even if he has an opinion, he feels shy of expressing it. The modern man shows more awareness of the diversity of opinions and attitudes. (3) A modern man is oriented more to the present and the future than to the past. He is also more regular, orderly and systematic in organizing his affairs. (4) A modern man is more oriented to planning and believes in it as a way of handling life. (5) A modern man believes in efficacy and is open to learning so that he can dominate the environment in order to advance his own purposes and goals, rather than being dominated entirely by that environment. (6) A modern man is great calculator and believes in a reasonably lawful world under human control. (7) A modern man shows more respect and dignity in his dealings with others. (8) A modern man has more faith in science and technology. (9) A modern man believes in democracy and distributive justice.

This list of attributes of a modern man could be extended but it is sufficient enough to serve the idea how modernization may be perceived at an individual level besides perceiving it at group and society levels.

## 12.4 Secularization

BRITISH rule brought with it a process of secularization of Indian social life and culture, a tendency that gradually became stronger with the development of communications, growth of towns and cities, increased spatial mobility, and the spread of education. The two World Wars, and Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns, both of which socially and politically mobilized the masses, also contributed to increased secularization. And with Independence there began a deepening as well as a broadening of the secularization process as witnessed in such measures as the declaration of India as a secular state, the Constitutional recognition of the equality of all citizens before the law, the introduction of universal adult suffrage, and the undertaking of a program of planned development.

We have seen earlier that Sanskritization is also spreading, and it may seem paradoxical that both it and secularization are simultaneously gaining ground in modern India. Of the two, secularization is the more general process, affecting all Indians, while Sanskritization affects only Hindus and tribal groups. Broadly, it would be true to say that secularization is more marked among the urban and educated groups, and Sanskritization among the lower Hindu castes and tribes. It is necessary, however, to reiterate that one of the results of a century of Westernization – secularization is subsumed under Westernization – is a reinterpreted Hinduism in which Sanskritic elements are predominant.

The term "secularization" implies that what was previously regarded as religious is now ceasing to be such, and it also implies a process of differentiation which results in the various aspects of society, economic, political, legal and moral, becoming increasingly *discrete* in relation to each other. The distinction between Church and State, and the Indian concept of a secular state, both assume the existence of such differentiation.

Another essential element in secularization is rationalism, a "comprehensive expression applied to various theoretical and practical tendencies which aim to interpret the universe purely in terms of thought, or which aim to regulate individual and social life in accordance with the principles of reason and to eliminate as far as possible or to relegate to the background everything irrational." Rationalism involves, among other things, the replacement of traditional beliefs and ideas by modern knowledge.

It would probably be safe to assume that Hindus were more affected by the secularization process than any other religious group in India as, first, the concepts of pollution and purity which are central as well as pervasive in Hinduism were greatly weakened as a result of the operation of a variety of factors already mentioned. Moreover, the fact that Hinduism lacks a central and nation-wide organization with a single head, and that it is largely dependent for its perpetuation on such social institutions as caste, joint family and village community – institutions which are changing in important respects – renders it peculiarly vulnerable to the forces of secularization. Different sections among Hindus are affected in different degrees by it, and generally speaking, the new elite are probably

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much more affected by it than everyone else. In my discussion of secularization I shall be referring principally to the new elite in Mysore, though it is probable that my remarks also apply with some variations to the elite in other parts of the country. I shall consider first the effects of secularization on ideas regarding pollution and purity, then the changes in the lives and position of priestly Brahmins and finally, the implications for Hinduism of changes in caste, village community and joint family. No student of Hindu religious behaviour can afford to ignore the concepts of pollution and purity. Terms exist for pollution and purity in every Indian language, and each of these terms has a certain amount of semantic stretch enabling it to move from one meaning to another as the context requires. Thus pollution may refer to uncleanness, defilement, impurity short of defilement and indirectly even to sinfulness, while purity refers to cleanliness, spiritual merit and indirectly to holiness.

The structural distance between various castes is defined in terms of pollution and purity. A higher caste is always "pure" in relation to a lower caste, and in order to retain its higher status it should abstain from certain forms of contact with the lower. It may not ordinarily eat food cooked by them, or marry or have sex relations with them. Where one of the castes is very high and the other very low, there is a ban on touching or even getting very close to one another. A breach of rules renders the higher caste member impure, and purity can only be restored by the performance of a purification rite and, frequently, also by undergoing such punishment as the caste council decides upon. Sometimes, however, the offence is so serious – as, for instance, when a Brahmin or other high-caste woman has sex relations with an Untouchable man – that the former is permanently excommunicated from her caste. The concepts of pollution and purity are important not only in a static but also in a dynamic context: traditionally, when a caste group or its section wanted to move up it would Sanskritize its style of life and stop accepting cooked food from those castes with which it had previously inter-dined.

Corresponding to the caste hierarchy are hierarchies in food, occupation and styles of life. The highest castes are vegetarians as well as teetotalers, while the lowest eat meat (including domestic pork and beef) and consume indigenous liquor. Consumption of the meat of such a village scavenger as the pig pollutes the eaters, while the ban on beef comes from the high place given to the cow in the sacred texts of Hinduism. Among occupations, those involving manual work are rated lower than those which do not. Manual occupations may involve the handling of dirty or polluting (for example, human waste matter) objects, or engaging in butchery which is regarded as sinful. At the lowest level of the caste system are occupations that are sinful or polluting or both.

Not only caste but also kinship is bound up with pollution ideas. Thus, birth as well as death results in pollution for specific periods for members of the kinship group, death pollution being more rigorous than birth pollution. Within the kinship group, the mourning period is longer for the closest relatives, such as widow, widower and sons, and the taboos are also more elaborate. The onset of puberty for a girl was traditionally marked by confining her to a room for several days, at the end of which time there was a purificatory bath and ritual. A woman was considered polluting during her monthly periods. Traditionally, women kept away from all activity and contact with other members of the household for three days during their periods. All bodily waste matter, with the exception of sweat, was regarded not only as dirty but as polluting. This is one of the reasons why a bath was a condition precedent to prayer; and while praying or performing ritual, the subject had to exercise sphincter and bladder control. Restraint on sex was also imposed on religious occasions, including pilgrimages to such shrines as the Madeshwara temple in Kollegal taluk in Mysore district and the famous temple to Shasta in southern Kerala.

The daily routine was also permeated with ideas of pollution and purity. A person's normal condition was one of mild impurity, and he exchanged this for short periods of purity or serious impurity. He had to be ritually pure not only while praying but also while eating (see in this connection pp. 53-54). In order to be pure, he had to have a bath, change into ritually pure clothes, and avoid contact even with other members of his family who were not in a similar condition. During certain festivals and the *shrdddha* (annual ceremony for dead father or mother) the subject had to abstain from even a drink of water till the ritual was over.

Traditionally, a man did not shave himself. He was shaved by a member of the barber caste, and the barber's touch as well as shaved hair were both polluting. After he was shaved, he was not allowed

to touch the bathroom vessels, but someone poured water over him while he sat on the bathroom floor. Only when he had been thoroughly drenched, and had gargled his mouth with water, was he allowed to touch the vessels. The place where the tonsure had been performed was purified with cowdung. There was some resistance initially to the use of the safety razor among the high castes, as its use involved pollution. The institution of the daily shave also violated the ban on shaving on certain days of the week, and other inauspicious days. The safety razor enabled a man to shave when and where he liked. I remember that once during my field work in Rampura I shaved after I had had my morning bath and the Peasant headman mildly reproved me for it. (His granddaughter, then about ten, was critical of my indifference to pollution.) In his own house, the safety razor had been tabooed, and when his graduate son came on an occasional visit from Mysore, he was allowed to use the razor only in an adjoining building used for guests.

Women, especially widows, and elderly men are generally more particular about observing the rules of pollution than others. The upper castes are more particular than the lower Brahmins are the most particular among the former, and among Brahmins priests out do the laity. Indeed, Brahminical preoccupation with purity-pollution ideas and ritualism is the subject of much joking if not criticism. Traditional Brahminical life requires not only leisure but also an absence of spatial mobility. Travel subjects orthodox Brahmins to great hardship and privation.

Just as notions of uncleanness and even sinfulness lie close to pollution, so do cleanliness, spiritual merit and holiness lie close to purity. While all baths purify the bather, bathing in a sacred river cleanses him, in addition, of sin (*papa*), and earns him *punya* or spiritual merit. A daily bath in a sacred river (*punya snana*), worshipping in a temple, listening to the narration of religious stories (*harikathd kalakshepa*), singing devotional songs in company with other devotees (*bhajan*), keeping the company of religious persons (*satsanga*), frequent fasting (*upavasa*), prayer and meditation (*prarthana, dhyana*)—these constitute the essence of a religious life as distinguished from a life devoted to secular concerns.

The notion of pollution and purity has both weakened and become less pervasive in the last few decades as a result of the forces already mentioned. It may be noted here that the popularity of travel and teashops is not confined to city folk but extends to villagers as well. When I began my field work in Rampura in 1948 villagers were surprised to find me walking to neighbouring villages. Why did I walk when there were buses? When I revisited the village in 1952 I found bus travel had greatly increased in popularity, and the headman himself had invested money in buses.

Urban life sets up its own pressures, and a man's daily routine, his place of residence, the times of his meals, are influenced more by his job than by caste and religion. This is all the more true when the city he lives in is a highly industrialized one such as Bangalore or Bhadravati, and not like Mysore, which derived its importance from being the traditional capital of the state until November 1, 1956, when it became part of a larger Kannada-speaking state. Even more influential is the fact that immigrants from the villages to cities are freed to some extent from caste and kin pressures, and must instead conform to the norms of work-mates and neighbourhood groups. I am not arguing that urban living leads to a total abandonment of the traditional way of life; in fact, it is a commonplace of observation that behaviour varies according to context, and people are not always worried by inconsistencies in it. A Nayar informant told Kathleen Gough, "When I put on my shirt to go to the office, I take off my caste, and when I come home and take off my shirt, I put on my caste." On a long-term basis, however, such contextual variation usually paves the way for the eventual overall secularization of behaviour. Thus, for instance, in Mysore in the early 1930s priestly (*vaidika*) Brahmins did not patronize coffee shops, even coffee shops where the cooks were Brahmins. Elderly lay (*loukika*) Brahmins also did not like to visit them; on those infrequent occasions when they did, they sat in an inner room specially reserved for Brahmins and ate off leaves instead of pollution-carrying aluminium and brass plates. Now very few coffee shops have rooms reserved for Brahmins—in fact, such reservation would be against the law. The most popular coffee shops in the city have a cosmopolitan clientele, and few customers bother about the caste of cooks and waiters. Even women occasionally visit them, and there are "family" cubicles where they can eat in privacy.

The more educated customers show concern about cleanliness in coffee shops and not about caste. Many of them prefer Western-style "coffee houses" as they appear to be cleaner, quieter and serve



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novel items. Often these “coffee houses” serve both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, and Brahmin youths are found experimenting with omelettes and other forbidden foods.

As a result of the spread of education among all sections of the population, traditional ideas of purity are giving way to the rules of hygiene. Purity and cleanliness are often at loggerheads; I have heard many an educated Brahmin expressing his disgust at the dirt and unhygienic character of “pure” clothes worn by the orthodox. Brahmin cooks are often found wearing or using for handling hot vessels, dirty clothes which have been rinsed but not cleaned with soap or sterilized. The unsanitary conditions prevailing in pilgrim centers is a frequent subject of conversation among educated Hindus, who are more conscious of the drains flowing into the Ganges than of the river’s holiness. This is not, however, the only tendency; educated Hindus are also found rationalizing traditional behaviour. Purity, according to them, is nothing more than hygiene, and it was brought within the field of religious behaviour only to make people more particular about it.

Any consideration of changed attitudes toward pollution must note the great popularity of education among Brahmin women in Mysore. In the old days, women were extremely particular about pollution, and the kitchen was the heart of the pollution system. The modern educated housewife, on the other hand, is much less particular about pollution and more conscious of hygiene and nutrition. Many observe rules of pollution only when they are living with their parents or in-laws. They become lax about the rules when they form separate households; a punctilious observance of pollution rules is not easy when there is only one adult woman in the house, unlike in a traditional joint family. Even in the latter, pollution rules are observed more strictly when there are old women who are widows and whose lives are centered in the kitchen and in the domestic altar (usually located in or near the kitchen).

Another and a potent source of criticism of orthodox Hinduism’s obsession with pollution and ritualism lay in the nineteenth century movement to reinterpret traditional religion. It was essentially a puritanical movement in which an attempt was made to distinguish the “essence” of Hinduism from its historical accretions. Ritualism and pollution rules were interpreted as extrinsic to true religion, and as even wrong, while devotion and simplicity were of the essence. There was support for such a view in the Bhagavad Gita and in the lives of the saints.

### Process of Secularization

Another area which has been affected by the secularization process is life-cycle ritual. There has been an abbreviation of the rituals performed at various life-cycle crises, while at the same time their purely social aspects have assumed greater importance than before. Ceremonies such as name-giving (*namakarana*), the first tonsure (*chaula*) and the annual ritual of changing the sacred thread (*upakarman*) are beginning to be dropped. For girls, the attainment of puberty is no longer marked by the elaborate ritual that characterized it a few decades ago. The shaving of a Brahmin widow’s head, as part of the funeral rite for her dead husband, has also largely disappeared, and among the educated, widow marriage is no longer strongly disapproved.

Rituals are not only omitted or abbreviated but are also telescoped with others, though this seems to be rarer than the other two phenomena. Thus the wedding ritual may be combined with the donning of the sacred thread at the beginning of the ceremony, and with the consummation ritual (*garbhadana*) at the end. In fact, only funeral ritual and the annual *shraddha* continue to be performed with the same strictness as before, though even here changes seem to have occurred with respect to the kin groups participating in the ritual. The scattering of agnates over a wide area is one of the factors responsible for this change.

The manner in which the wedding ritual has been abbreviated is interesting. Formerly, a full-blown Brahmin wedding would last between five and seven days. Now, however, much of the non-Sanskritic and folk ritual, traditionally the exclusive preserve of women, is being dropped. There is even an increasing tendency to compress Sanskritic ritual into a few hours on a single day. The crucial religious rituals such as *kanyadana* (gift of the virgin) and *saptapadi* (seven steps) are witnessed only by the concerned kindred, while the main body of guests attends the secularly important wedding reception. At the latter the bridal couple sit on a settee at the back of a hall, both in their best clothes, the groom generally sporting a woollen suit, usually a gift from his father-in-law. The guests are introduced to

the couple after which they sit for a while listening to the music and then depart, taking with them a paper bag containing a coconut and a few betel leaves and areca nuts. The reception is a costly affair as both the price of coconuts and the fees of musicians are high during the wedding season. But the number of guests, their social importance, the professional standing of the musician hired for the occasion, the number of cars parked on the street outside the wedding house, the lights and decorations, and the presents received by the bridal couple are all indicators of the status and influence of the two affinal groups in the local society. Invitations are extended to ministers and other prominent politicians, to high officials and various local worthies to develop, strengthen and exhibit links with these important people. The wedding reception is a recent institution—the word “reception” has passed into Kannada—and its great popularity is one of the many pointers to the increased secularization of Brahminical life and culture.

Another evidence of increased secularization is the enormous importance assumed by the institution of dowry in the last few decades. Dowry is paid not only among Mysore and other South Indian Brahmins, but also among a number of high-caste groups all over India. The huge sums demanded as dowry prompted the Indian Parliament, in 1961, to pass the Dowry Prohibition Act (Act 28 of 1961). So far the Act has not had much success in combating the institution.

The interesting feature of dowry among Mysore Brahmins— and this is probably true of several other groups as well—is that engineers, doctors and candidates successful in the prestigious Indian Administrative Service seem to command much bigger payments than others.

The amount of time spent on daily ritual has been steadily decreasing for Brahmin men as well as for women. Ingalls has stated, "The head of the family might spend five hours or more of the day in ritual performances, in the *samdhyā* or crepuscular ceremony, in the bathing, the offerings, the fire ceremony, the Vedic recitations. The Brahmin's wife or some other female members of his family would devote an hour of the day to the worship of the household idols." In order to be able to spend five hours every day in performing ritual, a man had to have an independent source of income or have priesthood as his occupation. Traditionally, Hindu kings at their coronation made gifts of land and houses to pious Brahmins, as well as on other occasions such as birth, marriage and death in the royal family. Such acts conferred religious merit on the royal house. However, as Brahmins in Mysore became more urbanized and as Western education spread among them, they found it increasingly difficult to lead a life devoted to ritual, prayer, fasting and the punctilious observance of pollution rules. Milton Singer has recorded a similar process among Brahmins in Madras:

That is to say, they found in their new preoccupations less time for the cultivation of Sanskrit learning and the performance of the scripturally prescribed ritual observances, the two activities for which as Brahmins they have had an ancient and professional responsibility. They have not, however, completely abandoned these activities and to some extent they have developed compensatory activities which have kept them from becoming completely de-Sanskritized and cut off from traditional culture.

The sharp rise in the age of marriage of Brahmin girls enabled them to take advantage of opportunities for higher education, and this resulted in a breach in the crucial locus of ritual and purity—the kitchen. Traditionally, a young Brahmin girl worked in and around the kitchen with her mother until her marriage was consummated and she joined her affines. All that was required of her was knowledge of cooking and other domestic chores, the rituals that girls were expected to perform, knowledge of caste and pollution rules, and respect for and obedience to her parents-in-law and husband and other elders in the household. Education changed the outlook of girls and gave them new ideas and aspirations. It certainly made them less particular about pollution rules and ritual, though as long as they lived with their affines they could not completely ignore them.

Very few urban Brahmin parents would now deny that education is a necessity for girls, though they would certainly differ as to how much education is desirable. Aileen Ross, who recently made a field study of the urban family in Bangalore, sums up the position as follows:

On the whole this study shows that most young Hindu girls of the middle and upper classes are still educated with a view to marriage rather than to careers.

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However, a number of parents were anxious to have their daughters attend universities. Perhaps one of the main reasons for this new trend is that, with the change from child to adult marriage, the leisure time of girls must now be filled in up to nineteen or even twenty-five years. And college is one way of “keeping them busy” until marriage. Another reason mentioned by interviewees was that the difficulty of finding suitable mates for daughters sometimes forces parents to prolong their education further than they had first intended.

Many girls, then, enter careers apparently not because they want them, but because there is nothing else to be done until their parents find them husbands. But it is a fact that a large number of women are employed today in the cities as teachers, clerks, doctors, nurses, welfare workers, and from the point of view of the traditional society, this is indeed revolutionary. It is only to be expected that women’s education will bring about radical changes in domestic social life and culture. Ross concludes from her study of educated women in Bangalore that “women of the household will gradually cease to be the strong backbone of family tradition and caste customs.” This does not, however, mean that there is a complete breakaway from tradition; while hours may not be spent in ritual, there is usually a domestic altar where lamps are lit and prayers said. Freedom from pollution does not go so far that educated Brahmin women eat in the homes of all other castes, let alone Harijans. While the endogamous circle has widened and subcaste barriers are crossed – for example, a Mandya Sri Vaishnava Brahmin may ignore all subdivisions among Sri Vaishnava Brahmins – marriages between Brahmins and other castes such as Okkaligas or Lingayats are few and far between. While the Brahmin dietary may be enlarged to include the traditionally banned eggs, meat-eating is still rare.

The religious beliefs and practices of educated Hindus are only now beginning to be studied. Apart from the intrinsic importance of the subject, no study of the processes of Westernization can afford to neglect changes in religion.

Secularization, even politicization, is an important tendency in urban religion, though not the only one. For instance, the famous Dasara or Navaratri festival which was bound up with the royal family of Mysore, and celebrated with great pomp and pageantry, has changed its character with the merger of the former princely state into new and enlarged Mysore. The rise to power of the dominant Lingayat caste in state politics, and increased regionalism, have both found expression in the festival commemorating the birth of Basava, founder of the Lingayat sect, becoming more popular since the early fifties. The festival lasts several days, and is celebrated in all the big towns and cities that have Lingayat concentrations. *Deepavali* (festival of lights), *Sankranti* (harvest and cattle festival), *Ugadi* (New Year) and *Rama Navami* (birthday of Rama) are common to most Hindu groups in the state, while others such as *Gokulashtami* and *Shivaratri* (Night of Shiva) have a predominantly sectarian character. The *Rama Navami* has become, throughout South India except Kerala, an important “cultural” occasion, concerts of classical South Indian music being held in all cities during the nine days of the festival period. The popularity of South Indian classical music has increased greatly in the last two or three decades, and music lovers, whether religious or not, look forward eagerly to the *Rama Navami*. The concerts are well attended, and open to all who can afford the price of admission. But while there is no doubt that the festival has undergone some secularization, classical South Indian music is essentially devotional, and the great composers whose songs are sung at the concerts were all very devout men. As Singer has rightly observed, “There is no sharp dividing line between religion and culture and the traditional culture media not only continue to survive in the city but have also been incorporated in novel ways to an emerging popular and classical culture.”

In recent years, temples have shown considerable activity, and have organized *harikathas* (the narration of religious stories by experts in the art) during *Dasara*, *Rama Navami* and other occasions. The *harikathas* continue for several days, sometimes even for several weeks, and attract large audiences who spill over from the temple yard to the roadside, listening to the story and song. Sound amplifiers are regarded as essential at these narrations.

Pious individuals with a flair for entrepreneurial activity organize Vedic sacrifices (*yajnya*) which involve a large investment of money, time and energy, and which go on for several days. The sacrifice may, for example, be to end a drought or for the “welfare of mankind” (*loka kalyana*). Another popular activity is to undertake to write the name of *Rama* or some other deity a billion times, and then

celebrate the occasion with a big sacrifice. Hundreds of volunteers are enrolled for writing the name, huge sums of money are collected, elaborate arrangements are made for the accommodation of devotees who wish to witness the celebration, and attempts are made to involve important people including ministers and members of the state legislatures in this activity. Local newspapers give much space to describing the final phase of the celebration, the number of people who had gathered, the arrangements made for their comfort, the ritual and, of course, the speeches.

Pilgrimages are very popular and enable large numbers to satisfy their religious aspirations as well as to see the country tourist buses cater to both these needs, as they include shrines as well as objects of tourist interest in each tour. The social and religious horizons of the people have widened considerably; the peasants of Rampura village now regularly visit the famous Tirupati temple in Andhra Pradesh, whereas before World War II they only visited shrines which were nearby. The richer peasants in Rampura have visited the big pilgrimage centers in South India, such as Rameshwaram, Madurai and Shrirangam. The urban-educated manage to visit at least once the great pilgrimage centers of Banaras, Allahabad and Hardwar in the far north. A well-known South Indian travel agency runs special pilgrim trains for their benefit.

Educated pilgrims are not indifferent to good accommodation, nor to food at the centers they visit. They also do a certain amount of sightseeing and shopping on the side. Sometimes this is given as evidence that the religious motive has become extremely weak, if not totally absent in modern pilgrimages, and that these only provide a good excuse for travel and “patriotic sightseeing”. This assumes among other things that the only motive in traditional pilgrimages was the religious one – which, indeed, is questionable. For traditional pilgrimage centers were also shopping centers, and orthodox women who returned from pilgrimages waxed eloquent about the sights they had seen, the abundance or scarcity of vegetables and fruit, and the local price of milk and *ghee*.

The Brahmins of Mysore – like other Dravidian-speaking Brahmins in South India – are all traditionally followers of one or another of the three well-known sects: Smarthas (pure Monists), Sri Vaishnavas (qualified Monists) and Madhvas (Dualists). Each sect has a few monasteries (*mathas*, each presided over by a head (*mathadhipathi* or *swami*), and traditionally the monastic head exercised control over the conduct of his flock. Members had to be initiated into the sect by the monastic head, and when the latter visited their town or village they showed the respect due him by performing the “pada puja” (worshipping his feet and drinking the water used in the worship). The monastic head was the final authority in all religious matters, including caste disputes, and a follower could appeal to him against a decision of the caste council excommunicating or otherwise punishing him. This power of the monastic head has fallen into disuse. Even the purificatory ritual (*prayaschitta*) which a returnee from a trip abroad used to undergo has lapsed, owing to the popularity of foreign travel and the increased secularization of Brahmins. But while the power of the monastic heads has eroded greatly, they still command the respect and loyalty of their followers. In recent years contact between monastic heads and the laity seems to have increased. The state governments passed land reform and other legislation which hit the monasteries hard economically, and which have made inroads into their religious autonomy; this has resulted in the monastic heads making greater efforts than before to cultivate their followers. Many educated people now turn to heads of their sects for spiritual and other guidance.

New cults, built around saints, either alive or recently deceased, have come into existence in recent years. Saibaba, a saint of modern India whose tomb is in Shirdi in Maharashtra, has a large following in South India, and there are Saibaba prayer groups in several South Indian cities. Shirdi is a favourite place for pilgrimage. The shrine of Ramana Maharishi at Tiruvannamalai in Madras state is also visited, though his cult is not as popular as the Saibaba cult. Among the living *gurus* or teachers, Swami Chinmayananda is very popular and his lectures attract large audiences. The Ramakrishna Mission also provides a focus for the religious interests of many people. The rise of new cults and the functions they fulfil are subjects that need to be studied systematically.

Singer has commented that “The effect of mass media ... has not so much secularized the sacred traditional culture as it has democratized it.” School textbooks contain incidents from the Hindu epics and Puranas, the lives of regional saints, and extracts from old poets whose themes are almost always religious or moral. Journals and books contain much religious matter, and the popular children’s story magazine *Chandamama* exploits the inexhaustible mine of the epics, Bhagavata, the



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Puranas and others, for stories for children. The All-India Radio broadcasts devotional music every morning and, occasionally, *harikathas*. It also marks the big festivals by special programs which again draw on the traditional culture of the Hindus. The themes of many films are drawn from the epics, although “social themes” and romantic stories are not unimportant. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Dravidian Progressive Federation) writers’ use of films to conduct propaganda against caste and traditional religion is not without its effects. Tamil films are popular in Mysore, it being common for them to run for several weeks in the big towns and cities. Occasionally the themes are drawn from regional history and the lives of regional saints. But whatever the theme – mythological, historical or social – every film is long, has songs and dances, and comic and romantic interludes. Democratization, whether through films or the All-India Radio or in popular books and journals, brings about radical changes in the content of traditional culture. The highbrow and the purist would call it vulgarization, but what is interesting to note is that it involves an appeal on the one hand to particularistic loyalties such as region, language, sect and caste, and on the other to the universal attraction of sex, dance and song.

I discussed earlier how the orthodox elements in Hindu society were put continuously on the defensive ever since the early years of the nineteenth century when European missionaries began attacking Hinduism for its many ills and shortcomings. While the new Hindu elite deeply resented such attacks, they were themselves sufficiently Westernized to be able to take a critical view of their religion. Thus began a long era of reform of Hindu society and religion, and of reinterpretation of the latter. The path of the reformers was far from smooth; in fact, they were martyrs to the cause of modernization of Hindu and Indian society and culture. They and their families had to endure the criticism of kinsfolk, castefolk and others whose opinions they were sensitive to. Some were even thrown out of caste. As already noted, the revolutionary changes that have occurred in Hinduism in the last one hundred fifty years – to which the reformers contributed so significantly – make it very difficult for Hindus today to understand the difficulties faced by their forbears.

The orthodox elements among the Hindus, the foremost among them being priestly Brahmins (*vaidikas*), steadily lost prestige in the face of growing secularization and Westernization of Hindu life and culture. They were for a long time out of sympathy with, if not entirely critical of, the attempts to reform Hindu religion and society. Those among the *vaidikas* who had a reputation for Sanskrit learning continued to command the respect of the people, but with the institution of Sanskrit teaching in modern schools and colleges they began to lose their valued monopoly over the language. Sanskrit learning became open, in theory at least, to everyone irrespective of caste and religion. The development of the disciplines of comparative philosophy, archaeology, numismatics and history provided a broad chronological framework for Sanskrit literature, and freed it from much myth and legend. Those Pandits who did not take note of these new developments began to be regarded as intellectual anachronisms. And the last few decades have seen the rising prestige of technology, engineering, medicine and the sciences generally, while the other subjects, the humanities in particular, have lost much of their prestige. Students with the highest grades seek admission to courses in the prestigious subjects. Initially, parents were motivated by the economic security and high income available to doctors and engineers, but now prestige – the student’s as well as the family’s – seems to be equally important.

The Brahmin priests fought a continuous rearguard action against secularization of the life of lay (*laukika*) Brahmins. The Brahmins in Mysore state are among the most urbanized and educated of the local Hindus. Thanks to their early and great lead in education, they secured a large share of the high administrative posts, and dominated the professions. As their style of life gradually underwent change, a conflict arose between them and the priests. Many wore Western clothes, they met people from many castes and religions in the course of their work, and they did not perform the various daily rituals as scrupulously as before. Many had their heads cropped, and this went against the Vedic rule which required them to keep the *shikha* (a long tuft of hair at the top of the skull) just as the habit of the daily shave violated certain other rules. These deviations – along with the tendency to drop the painting of caste marks on the forehead, and to sit down to meals in secular clothes – drew the wrath of the priests. Even more serious were violations of the rules regarding food and drink, and the marrying of girls after they had attained puberty. The people who did these things had power and



prestige, but more humble folk imitated them in course of time. The priests lacked the courage—except during the early years of British rule—to throw their powerful patrons out of the caste, and as secularization spread among Brahmins, the priests had no alternative but to bow to the inevitable. Meanwhile, the style of life of the priests themselves became Westernized to some extent. Many even acquired a nodding acquaintance with English and were proud of displaying it.

Regrettably, there have been no studies of occupational changes among different generations of priestly families. But evidence already available shows that in both Bangalore and Mysore cities intergenerational occupational changes have been highest among Brahmins. Noel Gist, who studied intercaste differences in Mysore and Bangalore cities in 1951-1952, has reported that intergenerational occupational differences were highest among Brahmins as compared with other caste categories. In Mysore city, for instance, 82.7 per cent of household heads had occupations different from those of their fathers, and 76.8 percent of their own sons had departed from paternal occupations. For the non-Brahmin group, the percentages of deviation were 55.7 and 49.4 respectively, while for the Scheduled Castes they were 44.8 and 56.8. Gist's sample does not distinguish between priestly and lay Brahmins, but there is no reason to assume that the former were exempt from processes which affected the latter. From my own experience, I can recall many of my contemporaries in Mysore who came from priestly and orthodox families, but who chose secular careers.

In a word, then, the gradual erosion of priestly authority and prestige, and the secularization of priests, have brought about a situation in which priests lack the confidence to take any initiative in religious or social reform. They do not have the intellectual equipment or the social position to undertake a reinterpretation of Hinduism that would suit modern circumstances. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, such reinterpretation has come from the Westernized Hindu elite. The fact that this elite has been anti-ritualistic, as well as inclined to frown upon popular sacrifices, beliefs and practices, has stripped Hinduism of a great deal of its content.

The situation depicted above highlights the fact that, unlike the Biblical religions, Hinduism is without a universal organization and a hierarchy of officials whose function it is to interpret it in the context of changing circumstances. While it is true that some Hindu sects—such as the Smarthas, Sri Vaishnavas and Madhvas, the Lingayats and several others—have elaborate organizations headed by pontiffs, these pontiffs have authority only within their sects or divisions within sects, and not for Hinduism as a whole.

Another characteristic of Hinduism has been its extraordinary reliance on, if not inseparability from, the social structure. The three main elements of the social structure are caste, village community and family system. In Hindu India the political head, the king, was also the head of the social system, including caste. The relation of Hinduism to the state changed with the Muslim conquest of large parts of India. Some Muslim rulers were tolerant of Hinduism, while others who were not sought to convert infidels to the true faith and imposed *jiziya* or poll tax on non-Muslims. The British in their turn observed, on the whole, a policy of neutrality toward all religions, though the Church of England in India was supported from Indian revenues, and European missionaries enjoyed a favoured position thanks to the religious, cultural and racial links between them and the British rulers. It was only in the "native states" ruled by Hindu princes—such as Nepal, Travancore, Cochin, Mysore, Baroda, Jaipur and Kashmir—that royalty discharged some of the functions traditionally expected of it with regard to caste and appointment of monastic heads. The Hindu kingdom of Nepal was, and is, far more traditional in character than Hindu kingdoms elsewhere in the subcontinent, and today Nepal is the only Hindu kingdom in the world: "Until recently, the penal code of Nepal was based on the Shastras, and social, religious and criminal offences were dealt with by identical procedures. Brahmins were immune from capital punishment, and the crime of killing a cow could bring the death penalty."

If we are to understand future trends, the absence of a central organization for Hinduism, as well as lack of support from the political authority for maintenance of Hindu religion and social structure, must be viewed along with the radical changes occurring in the three institutions of caste, village community and family system. I have already dealt with the changes occurring in caste and shall not repeat them here. I shall merely point out that as a result of increased secularization and mobility and the spread of an equalitarian ideology, the caste system is no longer perpetuating values traditionally considered to be an essential part of Hinduism.

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The changes that have occurred in the Indian village community have resulted in its more effective integration with the wider economic, political, educational and religious systems. The vast improvement in rural communications that has taken place in the last few decades, especially since World War II, the introduction of universal adult franchise and self-government at various levels from the national to the village, the abolition of Untouchability, the increased popularity of education among rural folk, and the Community Development Program – all these are changing the aspirations and attitudes of villagers. The desire for education and for a “decent life” is widespread and vast numbers of people are no longer content to live as their ancestors lived. Villages in India today are very far indeed from the harmonious and cooperative little republics that some imagine them to be; it would be more accurate to describe them as arenas of conflict between high castes and Untouchables, landlords and tenants, “conservatives” and “progressives” and finally, between rival factions. Everywhere social life is freer than before, as pollution ideas have lost some of their force. Secularization and politicization are on the increase and villagers ask for wells, roads, schools, hospitals and electricity.

It is easy, however, to exaggerate the increase in the secularization of village life. It is true that the unit of endogamy has widened somewhat, but this is more true of the higher castes than of others. The widening is, moreover, along traditional lines; a crude way describing the situation would be that while barriers between sub-sub-subcastes or subcastes are beginning to break down, marriages spanning wide structural or cultural gaps are rare. That is, Peasants are not marrying Shepherds or Smiths or Potters, but different Peasant subcastes speaking the same language are coming together. (However, alliances involving structural and cultural leaps occur occasionally among the new elite in the big cities.) Inter-dining among castes is slightly more liberal than before, but only slightly. All the “touchable” castes will unite against Harijans who want to exercise their constitutional right of entering temples and drawing water from village wells.

The processes which have affected caste and the village community have also affected the family system. This has happened at all levels and in every section of the society, but more particularly among the Westernized elite, that is, the upper castes living in the larger towns and cities. The traditional system of joint families assumed the existence of a sufficient quantity of arable land and a lack of spatial mobility and diversity of occupations. The idea of selling land in the open market, which became popular during British rule, also contributed to the mobility of people. The development of communications, the growth of urbanization and industrialization, and the prestige of a regular cash income from employment in an office, factory or the administration, dispersed kin groups from their natal villages and towns. Yet it would be a gross oversimplification to suggest that the Indian family system has changed or is changing from the joint to the nuclear type. The process is extremely complicated, and there are not enough studies of changes in family patterns in different regions and sections of the society. Enumeration of the size of households or even their kinship composition is not enough, as an urban household may be perfectly nuclear in composition while kinship duties, obligations and privileges overflow it in many important ways. Many an urban household is only the “satellite” of a dominant kin group living in a village or town several hundred miles away. The Indian family system, like caste, is resilient, and has shown great adaptability to modern forces. It is still true, however, that significant changes have taken place in the family system of the Hindus, and these processes are not clearly discernible among the new elite groups. It is among them that there is great spatial mobility, and members who establish separate households in the large cities certainly live in a cultural and social environment significantly different from that obtaining in a traditional joint family in a small town or village. The urban household often lacks those elders who not only are tradition-bound but also have knowledge of the complex rituals to be performed at festivals and other occasions. Their mere presence exercises a moral influence in favour of tradition – as was vouched for by my Andhra Brahmin Communist informant, who said that he changed into pure clothes at meals “because of his grandmother”. The education of women has produced a situation in which young girls do not have the time to learn rituals from their mothers or grandmothers, and the small households in big cities frequently lack the old women who have the knowhow and the leisure. The educated wife has less of the traditional culture to pass on to her children, even should she want to. Still more significant is the fact that elite households have become articulators of the values of a highly competitive educational and employment system. Getting children admitted to good schools,

supervising their curricular and extracurricular activities, and worrying about their future careers absorb the energies of parents.

These changes in family system occurring among the new elite groups are, however, somewhat offset by other forces. In large cities such as Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, voluntary associations tend to be formed on the basis of language, sect and caste, and these make up in some ways for the loss of a traditional social and cultural environment. In a city such as Delhi, for instance, practically every linguistic group of India has voluntary cultural or other organizations which try to recreate for the speakers of each language their home environment. Concerts are held, plays are staged, *harikathas* are organized, regional festivals are celebrated, and regional politicians and other celebrities are welcomed. There is also a certain amount of residential clustering on the basis of language, and this is achieved even in housing projects built by the Government of India and which ostensibly do not recognize regional claims in allotting flats and houses! A homesick South Indian or Bengali likes to rent an apartment in an area where other South Indians or Bengalis live, and soon there come into existence shops selling the spices, pickles, vegetables, household utensils and cloth he was used to in his home area. The social network of an educated, white-collar South Indian or Bengali who is living away from his linguistic area does include many people who speak a different language, but those who speak his language will perhaps preponderate in it. To obtain a seat in a school or college or a job for a relative or fellow townsman, he may have to approach a Hindi or Punjabi speaker, but he does this usually through intermediaries who speak his own language.

Nevertheless, the traditional environment that is recreated in a big city differs significantly from the environment that has been left behind. It is a freer, more cosmopolitan and streamlined version, and it lacks the rich detail, complexities, rigidities, nuances and obligatoriness of the traditional environment. Besides, it caters more to the parental generation of immigrants than to the offspring generation. The latter do not think of their parents' natal region as "home", and many of them dislike visiting it even for brief periods. Their participation in the local culture and institutions is far greater than their parents. Occasionally, marriages cutting across the linguistic and caste barriers occur between them and local folk.

The processes of secularization and politicization have also affected monasteries and monastic heads. I have in mind not monastic or other organizations which came into existence during British rule (for example, Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj and Sanatan Dharma Samaj) but traditional and pre-British monasteries such as those of the Smarthas, Sri Vaishnavas, Madhvas and Lingayats. Gradually the feeling has grown among educated Hindus that the wealth and prestige of these organizations should be used for promoting education and the social welfare of the people; this is one of the reasons why acts passed by state legislatures giving the government considerable powers over the administration of temples and monasteries have not evoked more opposition. The Lingayats, a highly organized sect, have shown much sensitivity to this new demand, and Lingayat monasteries operate their own hostels, schools and colleges. Land legislation has everywhere abolished concession tenures such as *zamindari*, *jdgirdari*, *inam* and *jodi*. Those who enjoyed such tenures have been paid compensation and the land has been sold to former tenants and lessees. (Lands which were under the "personal cultivation" of *zamindars* were exempt from such legislation and, as could be expected, many of them took advantage of legal and even extralegal, loopholes to retrieve as much land as they could.) In many states, land held by temples was also affected by this legislation:

In Orissa, the High Court upheld the compulsory acquisition by the state, with the payment of compensation, of lands which had been dedicated to a Hindu deity (*Chintamani v. State of Orissa*, A.I.R., 1958, Orissa, p. 18). In Mysore, the Religious and Charitable Inams Act of 1955 empowered the government to resume lands which had been assigned by the maharaja to religious institutions; as compensation the state now makes an annual payment to the institutions. A number of state legislatures are presently in the process of fixing ceilings on land holdings. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Assam and West Bengal have agreed to exempt temple lands from these ceilings. In some of the other states, especially in South India where some of the wealthiest temples are found, a maximum has been fixed for temple land holdings, although higher than that for individual landowners.

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Those educated Hindus who did feel such legislation to be unfair criticized the government sharply and monastic heads saw in them a valuable ally against an ever-encroaching state. The reduced resources of monasteries caused some of the heads to turn to their followers for money. They began to undertake tours to raise funds and cultivate the laity and these activities were reported in the press, vernacular as well as English. The monastic heads not only continue to enjoy the esteem of the people but are cultivated by many politicians and they in turn appreciate the usefulness of having friends in political parties and legislatures. Studies of the changing role of monastic heads and other religious figures in modern Indian life would be a valuable contribution to the literature on secularization.

The process of secularization began with British rule and has become increasingly wider and deeper with the passage of years. But it is neither the only process during this period nor has it been always a pure and unmixed one. For instance, nationalism, a secular phenomenon, became enmeshed with Hinduism at one stage. Hinduism has assumed a political form in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Jan Sangh. The move to abolish Untouchability owed as much to a realization of the inhumanity of the institution as to an appreciation of the political loss that would result from the conversion of Harijans to another religion. The term "communalism", which is an Indian contribution to the English language, testifies to this tendency of religion to become mixed up with politics.

Sanskritization is not only spreading to new sections and areas, it is also increasing among groups which are considered to be already Sanskritized in their style of life. The spread of Sanskritization is aided by mass media and by such secular processes as the increased popularity of education and greater mobility, spatial as well as social. The idea of the equality of all men before the law, and the abolition of Untouchability, are throwing open a culture which was the monopoly of small traditional elites to the entire body of Hindus. The effects of some acts of legislation, such as the introduction of prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic drinks in many states, and the banning of the sacrifice of birds and animals in Hindu temples, are such as to make the government an unwitting but powerful agent of Sanskritization.

The significant changes occurring in the triad of institutions—caste, family system and village community—have resulted in Hinduism becoming, to some extent, "free floating". But this again is only a part of the story. New agencies have emerged to provide a structure for reinterpreted Hinduism. These agencies are still somewhat fluid and emergent. They are, on the one hand, such new institutions as the Ramakrishna Mission and Arya Samaj and, on the other, old sects and monasteries which are trying to adjust themselves to the new circumstances, and in that process are undergoing change.

Other traditional institutions such as *bhajans* (groups of people who meet periodically for singing hymns and worshipping a deity or saint), *harikathas* and the cults of saints are also contributing to the evolution of a new structure. Milton Singer has described in detail how the Radhakrishna *bhajans* function in Madras today, and he thinks that their popularity has increased in recent years. *Bhajans* are an all-India phenomenon, and were developed as an institution by the saints who sought salvation (*moksha*) through the pursuit of the *bhakti marga* or the path of devotion. *Bhajans* are popular in both rural and urban areas and among all classes of Hindus. The relative freedom of *bhajans* from ritual, their great aesthetic and emotional appeal and their ability to cut across caste distinctions, are some of the reasons for their popularity with urban and educated Hindus.

Although *bhajan* groups are sometimes organized around the worship of a saint, the cult of saints is not always associated with *bhajans*, and devotees may worship saints individually in the privacy of their homes. An occasional pilgrimage to the saint's *ashram* (hermitage) if he is alive, or to his tomb if he is dead, is also customary. The cult of saints is an old institution which has continued to modern times. Sects have occasionally emerged from such cults. Allegiance to a sect may be hereditary, entire lineages and subcastes being thus marked off from others, or it may be purely voluntary as in the case of modern saints. Where allegiance is voluntary it usually ignores caste, region and even religion. Saibaba, for instance, is a Muslim saint worshipped by a large number of Hindus, many of whom are educated. Pictures of the saint are kept and worshipped, and the writings by or about the saint are read and discussed. Most Hindus are articulate about their religious observances and beliefs and theological discussions are freely entered into by people who meet for the first time in trains, on buses or in hotel lobbies.



Organizations which profess to propagate Indian culture and thought also propagate Hinduism. The classical literature and thought of India are all Hindu, Buddhist and Jain, and books which popularize classical thought cannot help spreading a body of ideas shared by these three faiths. It is difficult indeed to draw a sharp line between the cultural and the religious in a country such as India, which has a long and recorded history, and where religion has been pervasive. Indian music, painting, sculpture and dance draw greatly on Hindu religion, iconography and mythology. An interesting development in the twentieth century is the emergence of Indian dance and ballet divorced from the traditional contexts of temple and festival, as purely aesthetic forms.

The government, too, is playing an important role in modernizing Hinduism through legislation and other means. It is doing this in spite of the fact that the Constitution declares India to be a secular state. I have already referred to the outlawing of Untouchability. Changes have also been introduced in Hindu personal and family law: bigamy is punishable by law; divorce and inter-caste and widow marriage are permitted; and widows and daughters have been given shares in ancestral immovable property. The administration of Hindu temples and monasteries is being radically altered by legislation undertaken by the states. The first of such attempts was embodied in the Madras Religious Endowments Act of 1927, and under it the government appointed a Board of Commissioners headed by a president to supervise the administration of Hindu endowments. This gave way in 1951 to the Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, under which was created a new department of government headed by a Commissioner. "The task of supervising temples and *mathas* thus passed from a regulatory commission to an executive department directly under a cabinet minister." This Act, which conferred great powers on the Commissioner, was challenged in the courts and the Supreme Court declared some of its provisions invalid. A new act was passed in 1959 with a view to meeting the objections of the court, and while it curtails some of the powers of the Commissioner vis-a-vis *mathas* and denominational temples, "the whole system of control over temples belonging to the general Hindu public, with vast powers vested in the Commissioner, has remained intact. As has been mentioned, these temples constitute the great majority of the Hindu religious institutions."

Other states such as Mysore, Bombay, Bihar and Orissa have also passed legislation, though not so far-reaching as in Madras, controlling the administration of Hindu religious endowments. In 1960 the Government of India appointed a Hindu Religious Endowments Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir C.R. Ramaswamy Aiyer, to examine the administration of Hindu religious endowments and suggest measures for its improvement. The Commission's report, submitted in 1962, urged the speedy enactment of legislation providing for governmental supervision of temples in states which did not already have such legislation, namely, Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, and the setting up of institutes to provide priests with instruction in Sanskrit, scriptures and ritual, and of theological colleges for the study of religion along with the humanities. Moreover, the Commission recommended that the Government of India give consideration to enacting uniform legislation regulating endowments for all communities. (Bombay state already has such legislation in the Bombay Public Trusts Acts of 1950.)

Legislation undertaken by several states, ostensibly to ensure that endowment funds are not misspent, has resulted in establishment of government departments which determine how Hindu temples and monasteries are to be run and how their money is spent.

Thus funds from the famous temple at Tirupathi (regulated by special legislation) have been used to establish a university, schools, orphanages, hospitals, etc. Throughout South India, Tirupathi has become the symbol and the model of the new Hinduism which transforms the offerings of individualistic piety and devotion to God into social institutions, dedicated to the service of man. Hinduism is being infused with a modern outlook and a new sense of social responsibility. This is a religious reformation of a fundamental nature. But as the agency of this reform is to a large extent the state, it should not be surprising if devout Hindus object to the liberties being taken with their religion.

Thus the state has become an important means of reinterpretation of Hinduism in the middle decades of the twentieth century, and this in spite of India's proclaimed policy of being a secular state. The state, though most important, is not the only organization performing this function, as I have pointed



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out earlier. Political parties such as the Hindu Mahasabha and the Jan Sangh, and “cultural” organizations such as the militant Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, become agencies for the perpetuation and reinterpretation of Hinduism. In a word, Hinduism is becoming increasingly, though very slowly, dissociated from its traditional social structure of caste, kinship and village community, and is becoming associated with the state, political parties and organizations promoting Indian culture. Traditional institutions such as monasteries and temples, cults of saints, *bhajan* groups, and pilgrimages have shown resilience and adaptability to new circumstances. Mass media such as the films, radio, books and newspapers are playing their part in carrying Hinduism to all sections of the Hindu population, and in the very process of such popularization are reinterpreting the religion.

### **Globalization, Human Rights and Contemporary India**

Every nation and society in the course of its history is confronted with the issues that dominate the concerns and preoccupations of its people. India has been confronted by the problems of casteism, communalism, regionalism and ethnic conflicts, tribalism and linguism. But of late communalism along with globalization and violation of human rights have emerged as dangerous forces threatening the health of India. Communalism has already been dealt with in some details in the section ‘Religion and Society’ in the present book.

Now let us take a hard look at the status of globalization and human rights.

### **12.5 Globalization**

‘Globalization’ has emerged as one of the most important and talked about phenomenon of the present age with its social, economic and political dimensions. *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* (1995) describes globalization as a “process in which social life within societies is increasingly affected by international influences based on everything from political and trade ties to shared music, clothing styles, and mass media”. Perhaps, the most powerful form of globalization is economic in which planning and control expand from a relatively narrow focus such as a single firm doing business on a regional or national basis to a broad global focus in which the entire world serves as a source of labour, raw materials, and markets. When business is conducted on a local level, for example, problems of dealing with workers, obtaining raw materials and other goods, transportation, and selling the final product all take place within the same social framework. In a globalized economy, however; Transnational Corporations operate in many different countries at once and exploit variations in local conditions for their own advantage. If workers in a more affluent industrial society such as Britain or the United States, for example, go on strike in order to improve pay or working conditions, a transnational corporation can simply shift work to another country where workers are more compliant and have lower expectations.

Analysing the necessity of international economic and socio-political management in the face of globalization, Samir Amir (1997), a renowned and strong voice on the issue of globalization and its implications for third, world countries, says that the globalization of the capitalist system is certainly nothing new, but it has undeniably taken a qualitative step forward during the most recent period. Moreover, this deepening economic interdependence between nations occurs at a time when there is a crisis of accumulation, and the post-war boom has given way to stagnation. The advance of globalization has not been confined to trade, it also affects productive systems, technology, financial markets, and many other aspects of social life. The new globalization erodes the efficiency of economic management by nation-states though it does not abolish their existence.

Rise of ethnicity as a political response to economic globalization is yet another important dimension of globalization. Samir Amin (ibid) says that the “present epoch is surely characterized by an awakening, or reawakening marked by collective social identifications which are starkly different from those defined by membership of a nation-state or a social class. Regionalism, linguistic and cultural assertion, tribal or ethnic loyalties, devotion to a religious group, attachment to a local community, are some of the multiple forms this reawakening has taken”. In Africa the dissolution of national unity sometimes seems to have given way to ethnicity as a basis for the legitimate renewal of competing forces. In India, in Afghanistan, in Eastern Europe, in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, even in Western Europe, in Spain, national unity has been put in question. When

we take a close look at the thesis put forward by the advanced and dominant countries and the system in support of globalization we find that the management of the political and social systems by the single virtue of the market is a utopia. Concerned at the rise of ethnicity and religious fundamentalism in third world countries, Samir Amin (ibid) puts forward an alternative agenda of action the question of ethnicity should be replaced in the strategic framework. By an action one can sum up thus: respect diversity, unite in spite of it. Respecting diversity means renouncing the empty discourse of power which pretends to act in the 'national interest' (which this power more often than not betrays) by pretending to intertribalize the ideology of the nation-state. The rise of *Hindutva* forces in India pretending to be 'nationalist', but in fact opposed to pluralism and consequently anti-minority in nature, the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Some Arab nation-states exhibiting similar trends has been strengthened by the process of globalization.

The passive acceptance of the inevitability of globalization in its present polarizing form, equation of development with the expansion of the market should be fought. Each society should be allowed to negotiate the terms of its interdependence with the rest of the global economy. National development can be pursued in a pluralistic world. The very goal of homogeneity *may* also be divisive especially in the case of the pluralistic third world countries.

## 12.6 Impact of Globalisation

When We look at the impact of globalization on various segments of Indian society in concrete terms, we are confronted by a scenario where it will, and it has had already an adverse impact on all the social groups which have been suffering silently different forms of oppression, exploitation deprivation and marginalization – Women, Dalits, Tribals, Minorities, etc.

**Women** in India have been badly affected by globalization-economically and socially. Because of scarcity of food and other necessities of life the poor in India, for sheer economic reasons, feed their girl children less than their boys, as boys are perceived as major bread earners. This also contributes to the widening gap in the sex ratio. With decreasing subsidy on food, the food security has been shrinking rapidly and the poor women have to spend more "women hours" on unproductive and meaningless labour. With growing retrenchment of their menfolk, women workers previously working as agricultural labour are mostly consigned to the organized sector in urban areas at starvation or less than starvation wages. Hiring women workers seems to be more convenient for the employer because women workers face more difficulties in getting organized than male workers get and hence more susceptible to exploitation.

While globalization is making people more materialistic and money minded the greed for dowry is also increasing rapidly and the poor parents of girls are being further pushed to difficult and humiliating conditions. With increasing globalization a frenzy has been created over the so-called "beauty contests. As Arvind (2002) rightly points out, "While the benefits of this frenzy are reaped by the corporations who advertise their products via these phenomena, the entire display has had its impact on the minds of urban women, particularly middle and lower middle class young women. The vast proliferation of "beauty parlours," "facial" creams and other cosmetics which promise to increase "fairness" bear witness to the notions being inculcated. Equally, by the logic of the "market economy", prostitution is a perfectly legitimate activity-one more industry of the "service sector". In this age of globalization girls from even well to do families are going into prostitution and call girl profession either directly or through the so called beauty parlours, massage parlours and "make a friend" industry through telephonic communication.

Unfortunately the so called liberal westernized culture promoted by the media especially cable TV, has not helped the process of democratization of social relations and decrease in patriarchal value system. In fact feudal values and patriarchal system have increased under the impact of *Hindutva*. Thus, with globalization, women are being further marginalized, patriarchal values are sought to be strengthened, and 'commodification' of women is increasing leaps and bounds. "Genuine democratization of relations between men and women can only come through an uncompromising struggle against the existing feudal/patriarchal values and the imperialist culture, promoted by the ruling classes of India". (Arvind, ibid).

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*Dalits* in India belong to a large section of the society, which has been subjected to human indignities on account of caste differentiations perpetuated for centuries and millennia. They still bear the burden of acute poverty and worst types of social degradation. They, usually, fall at the bottom of almost any parameter relating to economic well being or quality of life. B.L. Mungekar in *State Market and the Dalits: Analytics of the New Economic Policy* in a lucid analysis of dalit plight says that, “the effects of the birth based occupational distribution on different castes were entirely opposite in nature. It proved to be a divine privilege to the upper castes enjoying the virtual monopoly of education, industry, trade, commerce and so on; on the other hand, it spelt disaster for the lower castes. This is because the latter were assigned the tasks involving only manual labour. They were thus prevented from earning/accumulating wealth, which restricted their needs to bare existence. What proved to be further deplorable, menial labour was stigmatized. Thus, the absence of freedom of occupation, low earnings (mainly in kind), implicit restrictions of needs, and stigma on menial labour destroyed economy of the lower castes. They came to be wholly dependent on the upper castes for their economic existence. As a result, the dalits remained socially outcaste, economically dependent, politically powerless and culturally backward.”

The main elements of current economic reforms as a part of globalization are (i) liberalization of external trade, (ii) liberalization and 'opening' up of domestic financial markets, (iii) direct foreign investments, (iv) cuts in subsidies, and (v) gradual privatization. While the richer sections tend to gain, the poor ones have to suffer during the “structural adjustment programmes”. The lower allocations to social sectors are likely to adversely affect the poor and the dalits, being the overwhelming majority of the poor, are the worst sufferers. It is the poor who depend largely on public services and any reduction in budget allocations contributes to the reduction and availability of social services and their consequent higher costs.

In socio-economic terms the small gains made by the dalits through reservations are being reversed. More than 75 percent of the dalit workers are still connected with land; only 25 percent of which are marginal and small farmers while the rest earn their livelihood as landless labourers. In the urban areas, they mostly work in the unorganized sector. Under the impact of the new economic policy, land reforms, the key question for their development, are being pushed out of the agenda and are being substituted with corporatisation of farming for the global agricultural market. The policy thrust of the World Bank-IMF-WTO combine has always been clearly for the abolition of the land ceiling laws and for liberalising investment into agriculture. “Thus inflation and the slow growth process are squeezing the poor while the expenditure on poverty alleviation programmes and social services are declining in real terms because of the fiscal crunch. Admittedly, the main burden of adjustment is likely to fall on the poor and the Dalits” (P.G. Jogdand, 2000).

In an empirical study of two villages in Andhra Pradesh J.M. Prasad of *Sakshi* and David Sudhakar of *Sampark* bring out adverse effects of globalization on the dalits. Globalization policies rest on three basic premises. One, the forces of competition would achieve optimum allocation of scarce economic resources and their efficient use. Second, opening up of the economy would give access to foreign capital and technology, which on the one hand, would strengthen the forces of competition and efficiency and, on the other, help promote exports. Third, the above two would help to achieve a higher rate of economic growth. Under these premises globalization policies in agrarian sector are formulated to ensure freer and more efficient markets and pricing for agricultural imports as well as produce. To achieve this, policies mainly focused the following: (i) to promote crops and cropping pattern for export, (ii) to stable policies for export of agro-based commodities, (iii) to ensure availability of inputs-seeds, pesticides and fertilizers, (iv) to ensure access to credit by group lending and community credit, and (iv) reduce subsidies and also to prevent farmers from stocking and waiting for better prices. In any markets in inter-linkage operations, dominant caste landowners play critical role and dalits do not have role in any market i.e. land, credit, labour and output markets in the villages. The implications of these changes in operation are as follows:

- Restricted access to land either for buying if they are able to, or for lease.
- Dalits who were attached to landowners were able to get small pieces of land on lease that also interlinked with their labour and produce. That means person who with their labour and produce. That means person who takes land on lease has to render either free labour or far below market wage and also has to bind and sell their crop to the landowner.

- No choice of crop for cultivation and selling of their product.
- No space to bargain for better wages.
- More dependency on landowners for credit, that also by interlinking with their labour services and product with varying interest rates.

In the education sector, the new *Policy Framework for Reforms in Education* drafted by the committee headed by Mukesh Ambani and Kumarmangalam Birla seeks to drive privatization and introduce commercialization of higher education on the pattern of USA. The pay seats in the educational institutions are fortifying the class basis of education. The poorer sections of the society, especially the dalits and the tribals along with the minorities, are going to be the biggest losers. The quality education, especially higher education, is increasingly becoming unaffordable for these sections of the society. The advent of globalization is also bringing about a new value system and encroaching upon the cultural values of these sections.

*Tribal* population of the country shares a number of features of the impact of globalization with the dalits. This is mainly because of the reason that both these segments have been and still are the deprived and marginalised populations. As with dalits, the systematic cuts in welfare expenditure, the privatization of public sector, drop in investment in agriculture, dismantling of the public distribution system, etc have also hit the tribals very hard. In the name of 'development', tribal people are being driven off their lands, their forests are being submerged, their sources of income are being sapped, and they are thus being virtually pushed to death.

The entry of Multi National Companies into industrial mining and commercialization of forest products are likely to increase inequalities of income and consumption between regions and peoples. The new agricultural policy enunciated by the government is capital intensive; improved seeds, pesticides and fertilizers are costly and subsidies are being with drawn. There is also encouragement for mechanized farming. This is harmful to the tribal interests. Globalization policies threaten to disturb the bio-diversity of forest areas preserved for millennia by the tribal communities. The MNCs are going to steal the gene resources of plants, herbs and trees or seeds. They will claim intellectual property rights on those items, which are under the nature and control of the tribal people. Globalization is also promoting over-consumption of industrial and consumer goods, thus changing the life style of the tribal and other deprived people to their disadvantage. Disruption of traditional crafts and small-scale industries is predictable as capital efficiency factor is throwing out small-scale units. There will be more unemployment as traditional labour intensive small-scale industries will be displaced by new technologies.

The impact of globalization on the Scheduled Areas should be a major area of concern for the tribal population. In order to adapt to the globalization processes the policy makers are preparing to make a complete reversal of the Indian Constitution wherever peoples' rights and control of resources are concerned. In a globalised situation, it is the market and not the community, which is the chief player. All laws and policies relating to the Scheduled Areas—the land transfer regulations, the forest act, the environmental protection act, the land acquisition act are all under immediate threat of repeal, dilution or amendment. These laws were meant for the protection of people and resources while the new policies call for exploitation of resources at the cost of people. Now all these 'bottlenecks' are being removed to promote globalization. The tribal population has always been known for their strong community life and collective spirit and they used it as a part of their 'survival strategy'. This is rapidly being eroded through the promotion of private rights at the cost of 'community rights'. Thus the tribal people are going to be the worst sufferers and the most coveted sacrificial goat for globalization.

*Minorities*, especially the Muslim minority, constitute one of the poorest and most backward and deprived segments of Indian population coming after scheduled castes and tribes. Thus, the economic impact of globalization policies is being felt by their poorer and deprived sections in the same way as that of the dalits and tribals. Moreover, they have also become victims of communalism and communal violence. As Arvind (ibid) rightly points out, "though the Indian State always had an upper we find, it becoming an important aspect of state policy from the mid-1980s, and particularly in the 1990s i.e. particularly in the period of globalization. This is not a mere coincidence." The most aggressive

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protagonists of *Hindutva* clearly demonstrate fascist tendencies and it has been the standard formula of fascists from the times of Hitler to use racism, communalism and anti-minority bashing to divert the attention of the majority community/population from their day to day problems and hardships. During the last decade or so attacks on minorities especially Muslims and Christians have grown many times culminating in the state sponsored violence against a minority, community in Gujarat. In the wake of these developments the minorities too are left with no other option but to join hands with other deprived and marginalized sections of the society to wage struggle against neo-imperialism coming in the garb of globalization.

### Human Rights Front

The great gift of classical and contemporary human thought to civilization is the notion of human rights. The struggle to preserve, protect and promote basic human rights continues in every generation in each society. New rights arise from the womb of the old. In specific sense, the natural rights of human beings as distinct from rights bestowed by law and convention come under human rights. The concept of man's inalienable basic rights is as old as Mesopotamian civilization. When the United Nations was founded in 1948, it adopted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was out of concern for the humanity to live a life of freedom and dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declare the following rights as Human Rights:

- Right to free speech
- Right to judicial remedy
- Right to freedom of movement
- Right to participate in one's governance (of nation)
- Right to work
- Right to good standard of living
- Right to rest and leisure
- Right to education
- Right to equal pay for equal work
- Right to participate in cultural life of community
- Right to enjoy arts and share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- Right to life, liberty and person's security
- Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile
- Right to fair and public hearing by independent and impartial tribunal
- Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- Freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Many of these human rights are enshrined in the Indian Constitution as fundamental rights. But, as rightly pointed out by Achut Yagnik (1991), "in the absence of a well developed civil society and a process of individuation, the western concepts of dignity of the individual, liberty and equalities and human rights are not easy concepts to apply to the Indian situation". Moreover, human rights are also the ultimate norm of politics, only (true) democracy, within the states and within the community of states, can truly guarantee human rights.

When we look at the origin and evolution of human rights movement in India, the obvious frame work is post-colonial democracy. The relatively modern post-colonial Indian State was confronted by its' "predominantly traditional social fabric, segmented and stratified around multiple ascriptive identities of religion, race, language, tribe, caste, spatial location, along with gender" (Aswini Ray, 2003). Thus, the violation of human rights is not committed by the State alone. The traditional social structures are also responsible for it. The structural basis of inequality and the consequent violation of human rights in India has been caste based social structure where the dalits have been and still are subjected to all sorts of atrocities. Not only this, though the practice of untouchability has been prohibited by the State, it still continues, though on a lesser scale, because of ritual purity/pollution basis of caste-hierarchy.



The first human rights group in India the Civil Liberties Union was formed by Jawahar Lal Nehru and some of his colleagues in the early 1930s with the specific objective of providing legal aid to some freedom fighters. It was not until the late 1960s that the real emergence of human rights groups took place. "This was triggered off when both the privileged social classes and the governed systematically cracked down on groups fighting for the rights of traditionally oppressed peoples-landless labour, marginal and small peasants, the unorganized working class and their mobilisers and supporters among the articulate and conscientious sections of the political middle classes" (Smitu Kothari, 1991). Several organizations were formed during this period, Notable among these were the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) in West Bengal, the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC) and later the Association for Democratic Rights (AFDR) in Punjab. It was only after Jaya Prakash Narayan launched a major agitation against the growing authoritarianism of Mrs. Indira Gandhi that a large number of prominent liberals and humanists some together with radicals in 1975 to form the first national human rights organization, the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights (PU CLDR). Within a few months, a series of political developments helped consolidate the scattered people and organizations working toward this end. The declaration of Emergency on June 26, 1975 proved to be a potent catalytic event. The decade of the 1980s marked in many ways a high point for the human rights movement. This phase saw the revival of the old and emergence of many new human rights groups.

The groups involved in advocacy of civil liberties, democratic rights and human rights in general raised three kinds of issues: (1) direct or indirect violations by the State (police lawlessness including torture, murders and illegal detentions), (2) denial in practice of legally stipulated rights as well as the inability of government institutions to perform their functions, and (3) structural constraints which restrict realization of rights, e.g., violence in the family, landlords' private armies, the continuing colonization and exploitation of tribal people.

## Self-Assessment

### 1. Fill in the blanks:

- (i) Sanskritization and Westernization were developed by ..... in .....
- (ii) Vasco-da-Gama arrived with his ships at Calicut in .....
- (iii) Land legislation has everywhere abolished concession tenures such as zamindari, jagirdari, Inam and .....
- (iv) Hinduism has assumed a political form in ..... and the .....
- (v) In 1960, the government of India appointed a Hindu Religions Endowments commission under the chairmanship of .....

## 12.7 Summary

- The concepts of 'Sanskritization' and 'Westernization' were developed by M.N. Srinivas in 1952 in the analysis of the social and religious life of the Coorgs of South India. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, caste was studied either in terms of the *varna* model or in terms of status based on notions of heredity and pollution and purity. Srinivas analyzed the caste system in terms of upward mobility. He maintained that the caste system is not a rigid system in which the position of each caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible. A low caste was able to rise, in a generation or two, to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism. It took over rituals, customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins and gave up some of their own considered to be impure. The adoption of the Brahmanic way of life by a low caste seems to have been possible, though theoretically forbidden (1985:42).
- Srinivas has defined 'Sanskritization' as a process by which the low castes take over the beliefs, rituals, style of life, and other cultural traits from those of the upper castes, specially the Brahmins. In fact, Srinivas has been broadening his definition of Sanskritization from time to time. Initially, he described it as "the process of mobility of lower castes by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism to move in the caste hierarchy in a generation or two (1962: 42). Later on, he redefined

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it as “a process by which a low caste or a tribe or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high twice-born caste” (1966: 6). The second connotation of Sanskritization is thus much broader because first Srinivas talked of imitation of mere food habits, rituals and religious practices but later on he talked of imitation of ideologies too (which include ideas of *karma*, *dharma*, *pap*, *punya*, *moksha*, etc.)

- Westernization refers to “the changes in technology, institutions, ideology and values of a non-western society as a result of cultural contact with the western society for a long period” (Srinivas, 1962: 55). Giving an example of Indian society, the technological changes, establishment of educational institutions, rise of nationalism and new political culture, etc. may all be described as the by-products of westernization or of the British rule of two hundred years in India. Thus, by Westernization, Srinivas primarily meant the British impact.
- Modernization has many dimensions. It may be perceived at society level, group level, or individual level. It may also be perceived as economic modernization, political modernization, social modernization, technological modernization, military modernization, police modernization, educational modernization, administrative modernization, and so forth. The concept has thus been employed in a diffused manner.
- Modernization is not a philosophy or a movement with a clearly articulated value-system. It is a process of change (Gore, 1982: 7). Earlier, the term ‘modernization’ was used to refer only to “change in economy and its related effect on social values and social practices”. It was described as a process that changed the society from primarily agricultural to primarily industrial economy. As a consequence of this change in economy, the society simultaneously underwent changes in values, beliefs and norms (Gore, *Ibid*: 7). Today, the term ‘modernization’ is given a broader meaning. It is described as “social change involving the elements of science and technology.” It involves change based on rationality. According to Alatas (1972: 22), modernization is a process by which modern scientific knowledge is introduced in the society with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better and more satisfactory life in the broadest sense of the term, as accepted by the society concerned. In this definition, the phrase ‘modern scientific knowledge’ involves: (i) the recourse to experimentation to assess the validity of suggested explanations, (ii) the assumption of laws explainable in terms of a rational and experimental approach as distinct from religious dogma and philosophical explanation, (iii) the employment of definite methods in ascertaining the validity of facts, (iv) the use of concepts and signs, and (v) the search for truth for its own sake.
- The impact of the West on India, following Alatas (1972: 121), can be discussed in five phases. The first phase is that of hostile contact with the conquest of Alexander, etc., followed by contact of peaceful inter-change as the result of trade and commerce of successive centuries. The second phase began by the end of the fifteenth century when Vasco da Gama arrived with his ships at Calicut in 1498 A.D. Within a few years, the Portuguese occupied Goa. But the effect of these westerners was relatively restricted. The third phase began when East India Company established its rule in the beginning of the eighteenth century and later on the British rule was established in the country by the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the first step in the expansion of western culture in India. The fourth phase commenced with the beginning of the nineteenth century following the industrial revolution. With the economic exploitation of India by the British as source of raw materials, began the spread and dominance of western culture in social and cultural fields too. The fifth and the last phase began after the political independence of the country in 1947.
- BRITISH rule brought with it a process of secularization of Indian social life and culture, a tendency that gradually became stronger with the development of communications, growth of towns and cities, increased spatial mobility, and the spread of education. The two World Wars, and Mahatma Gandhi’s civil disobedience campaigns, both of which socially and politically mobilized the masses, also contributed to increased secularization. And with Independence there began a deepening as well as a broadening of the secularization process as witnessed in such measures as the declaration of India as a secular state, the Constitutional recognition of the equality of all citizens before the law, the introduction of universal adult suffrage, and the undertaking of a program of planned development.



## Unit 13: Factors of Social Change

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Know the factors of social change
- Discuss impact of social change
- Explain the social change and the future.
- Describe the explanations of social change.

### Introduction

There are a number of factors which are responsible for continuity and change in Indian society. Change may occur through adaptation or integration. Adaptation occurs when existing institutions readjust to meet new needs. Integration occurs when a society adopts a new element and makes it part of itself. Of the various factors which have enabled our society to adapt/integrate or fail to adapt/integrate, the most important ones are: political independence and introduction of democratic values, industrialisation, urbanisation, increase in education, legislative measures, social change in caste system, and social movements and social awareness (like feminism, globalisation and anti-casteism). We will analyse all these factors separately.

### 13.1 Factors of Social Change

Social change is brought about by various factors. These factors are mainly responsible for the differences in the rate and nature of change in different societies and at different times. They may be broadly classified into the following categories:

#### **Biological Factors**

Biological factors may be further classified into two types- **non-human biological** factors, and **human biological** factors.

The **non-human biological** factors include plants and animals. They affect the lives of the people in varied ways. Human beings need plants and animals for survival, be it for food, cloth, medicine and other purposes in many different ways as defined by one's culture. At the same time, man also eliminates or keeps away harmful and poisonous plants and animals by any available means. Man

also needs plants and animals indirectly for availing oxygen and other utilities through many processes, including photosynthesis. Besides, the biological environment also keeps on changing as one animal species gains ground at the cost of some other species in the course of struggle for existence. The struggle for existence of the species is also conditioned by geographic factors. The changes in the ecological system affect man **human lives** and changes the course of his struggle for survival. But modern man has been able to overcome much of the instabilities through various means of gaining control over the environment such as domestication of species and other technological know-how.

**Human biological** factors do affect social change in two ways in main— the genetic character of a given population, and the quantity, **density** and composition of population. Although, the influence of genetic character has not been as important as the latter, it cannot be sidelined altogether. The intelligence level of **Homo sapiens** (human beings) from other lower animals (non-human beings) is enough indication of the capability and potential of human faculty that bears on socio-cultural development. The human genetic character plays roles in the determination of numbers, composition and selection of population on one hand and hereditary quality of the successive generations. Human beings are changing all the time. We are different from our parents in our physical make-up, intelligence and **behaviours**. Every individual is not identical with the other either. Nevertheless, it is the change of genetic character of the human beings, except for the process of mutation and variations in genetic combination, that determine the physical and mental make-up of human beings.

**Population** change, unlike genetic factors, is considered to be one of the most important factors of social change. Growth in population and also its composition have been affecting various aspects of socio-cultural lives. With the invention of new technologies and enhanced knowledge of health care and sanitation, the rate of death has decreased greatly over the past two centuries. The decrease in the death rate has caused an enormous increase in the size of population. Simultaneously, life expectancy and life span have also increased. Thus, population change has itself become a social change and factor of further social and cultural changes.

Migration brings about further change by creating a new environment setting after the contact of two or **more** alien peoples and cultures with numerous new problems. Migration could also effect to the processes of acculturation, cultural diffusion **and/or** social conflict. On the other hand, food productivity would not improve that fast to be able to catch up with the growing population. There is a general tendency in India that population increases faster than the food productivity or food supply. Such incompatible situation could lead to other consequences, such as, an attempt to improve food productivity by increasing the acreage under cultivation, farming technology or other sources on one hand and **migration**, famine, disease or war on the other. There would also be tendency for checking of population growth by possible means such as family planning among others. Thus, a population change has itself become a social change and a factor of further social and cultural changes.

### Geographical Factors

Geographic changes have been significant factors of social change. There are several instances where social changes have been brought about by geographic factors. For instance, the complete annihilation of the inhabitants of **Pompeii** by volcanic eruptions, the destruction of San Francisco by earthquake and fire (in **1906**), the migrations of the Irish population to the United States after the potato famine in Ireland (in the **1840s**), the migrations of the inhabitants of southern United States to Southern California due to drought (in the 1930s) and so on. Natural disasters can cause both environmental and social changes. Victims of a natural disaster may be left without friends, relative, or resources besides their severe psychological trauma. They may have to abandon their community, or completely rebuild it.

**Ecological** change is also a major source of social change in the modern times. Many ecological changes have been induced by human beings. For instance, the size of a population of a geographic area and the manner in which the people exploit its natural resources have much to do with ecological change and social change. Over population of a region, overexploitation of a **region/border** area due to social and political conflict, deforestation, construction of large dams, among others, for one reason or another have caused enormous social and ecological problems in the contemporary world which are found to be even greater factors of social change than migrations and disasters.



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**Technological Factors**


Technology has been considered as one of the important factors of social change. This is quite true particularly in the context of the contemporary World. This is for the fact that variation in technology affects social organization **and/or** structure of a society in a significant way. However, the magnitude and the rate of change could differ from one period and situation to another depending on the availability and use of technology. For instance, change was very **slow** in the remote past (re-historicage) when our forefathers used crude implements such as stone tools for their day-to-day activities and survival. With the invention of modern technology, things have become very different with both good and bad effects.

The introduction of machine technology after the inventions and discoveries of advanced and sophisticated sources of energy and capabilities has brought about drastic changes. In other words, modern technologies have resulted in revolutionary change, be it industrial revolution, green revolution, technical revolution, and so on. All these revolutions have been largely responsible to the change in the mode of production, relations of production, old forms of social **organization** and structure, old ideologies, attitudes, beliefs, and traditions. This is so, because man adapts to the change of material environment caused by technology. We have ample examples of such phenomena.

The invention of gun power, atom bomb, and nuclear weapons have changed the techniques of war. The opening-up of transport networks due to modern technologies have enabled people to be more mobile and accessible to other places which would otherwise be impossible in the distant past. The invention of writing and other modern communication system, such as telephones, internet, etc., have made it much easier for people to communicate with each other even in distant places. Likewise, new technologies in the area of modern medicines have also enormously improved the state of human health system and its environment.

Industrial revolution has also brought about many changes in the society. The shift from **agrarian** to industrial production or from feudalism to capitalism have effected social changes affecting family relations, religion, and other institutions including the state. In almost the same way, green revolution does bring about changes in the society.

While modern technology has been a great boon to man, there are also the other dark side of it. This is mainly due to change of the old ways of life and systems, destructive nature of the technologies being designed or misuse of technologies for destructive ends. For example, the perceived ill-effects of technology on the society and its social institutions can be observed in many ways. One such impact is the disintegration of community life and promotion of individualism. The abuse of modern technologies to humanity has been quite alarming indeed. We can readily cite a few human-induced disasters due to modern technologies that are very familiar to us.



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The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945 which killed and fatally affected the 245,000 people was a clear example of the state action of destructive nature. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy of December 3, 1984 due to pesticide leak of the Union Carbide’s fertilizers plant **killing** thousands of people and **killing** many more due to chemical side-effects was an example of ill political judgment and irresponsibility. The deadly attack on the World Trade Center (WTC), New York, on September 11, 2001 killing thousands of people is an example of the act of terrorism and anti-humanity. The displacement of indigenous (Tribal) peoples in India due to construction of mega dams, such as **Narmada** dam (in **Maharashtra**, Madhya **Pradesh**, and Gujarat) **Mapithel** [Thoubal] and **Tipaimukh** dams (in **Manipur**) are some of the few examples of the incidences of uprooting the lives and deprivation of rights of the indigenous peoples for survival.

## Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural factors have been the most important causal factors of social changes. Man is the most important player of social change. In fact, man is the originator and the main agent of socio-cultural changes. Social change has been caused by various human activities in the **form** of discovery, invention, **diffusion**, social movements, and so on. Change is also caused by the attitudes and values of the people toward innovation in a particular society. There are also variations of attitudes of individuals within the society. Some individuals would consider the values of the society more seriously than other fellowmen and vice versa.

Societies located at world crossroads areas of greatest intercultural contact have always been centres of change. This is so because those societies in closest contact with other societies are more likely to change more rapidly through the process of diffusion. There are also other agents for intercultural contacts and diffusion such as war, trade, media, and tourism. On the other hand, isolated areas are generally centres of stability, conservatism, and resistance of change. Ethnographic evidences show that the most primitive tribes have been found among the most isolated communities.

Discoveries and inventions have contributed much to the process of social change. This truth is increasingly realised in modern times after the introduction of **modern** technological know-how. Discoveries and inventions are processes of innovations that can alter society. While discoveries are the act of finding something that has always existed but that was not known earlier, inventions on the other hand are devices constructed by putting two or more things together in a new way.

The discovery of America led to the massive migrations from Europe and the creation of a new state – the United States of America. The discovery of penicillin also prevented from various diseases. Again, the discovery of oil, and other minerals have also brought great social changes in the locality where it is found. In the same way, the inventions of alphabet, modern state, **etc.** (social inventions), automobile, telephone, etc. (material inventions) have caused enormous social **changes**.

### 13.2 Rate of Social Change

The rate of change is the speed at which change occurs in **time** and space. The rate of change has never been the same or uniform at all times. In the remote past, change was observed to be very slow. Whereas, in the recent times, change has become relatively very fast due to various factors, such as, new technological inventions, diffusions, and social revolutions. New scientific and **technological** revolution through new inventions paved way for the rapid change. For instance, industrial revolution, which was a great breakthrough in the system of **production** and distribution of goods that has brought **great** and rapid change in the **modern** times have been largely the result of scientific and technological inventions.

Social **and/or** cultural revolution also contributes to the acceleration of social change aside from **technological/material** revolution. Revolutionary social changes are large-scale changes in the structure of a society or a state. Revolutionary changes generally mean major or complete alteration in **the entire** basis of structure of a society including its **various** social institutions, culture, ideas, and belief **systems**. Many revolutionary movements for socialism, democracy, **nation-state/** self-determination etcetera are also responsible for acceleration of social change.

However, we should keep in mind that the rates of change that are being **discussed are not the** same for **all** societies. Even within the same society, there are variations in the rate of change. For instance, changes in urban areas are observed to be faster than those in rural areas. In the same way, changes will also be faster in the societies that are more open and receptive to change.


### 13.3 Impact of Social Change

The impact of social change on human society has been a major concern for social scientists, particularly, sociologists. The **impact** can be understood in two levels – impact of the individual and **group** or society. However, there **are different** views among sociologists on the nature of impacts on human society.

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There are many sociologists who believe that industrial society alienates individuals from one another because of the nature of the work. Karl Marx was one of the thinkers who believed that the move from agrarian to industrial societies would alienate people from their work. This, he felt, was inevitable because the goods produced would be owned by the factory owner, and not the worker. There are also other sociologists who think that industrial society would affect human society. Ferdinand Tonnies and Max Weber, among others, may be cited as those sociologists who subscribed to the idea that industrial society would affect human relationships, albeit in different ways.

Sociologists are also aware that modern socialisations and life styles encourage individuals to behave in a way that would be compatible with industrial life and specialised professions. The media also plays immense role in influencing the individuals to emulate and adapt to the lifestyles of the middle class.



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Social change has also caused mixed effects on human life. While acknowledging the various discoveries and inventions, so also the good elements of multifarious types of development, we do experience many ill effects of such processes that have been affecting human life and its environment. For instance, industrialisation and capitalism have increased the gap between the rich and the poor. It has furthered exploitation of the working class and marginalised sections of the society. It has also paved way for emerging culture of consumerism. In the process, there has been much erosion of cultural values and social relationships. The increasing bureaucratisation and corporatisation have also added to further deprivation of common people to have access to participating in the process of democracy, development, governance, and so on.

The introduction of modern know-how and technology has also caused great problems and anxiety to human life. The heavy use of automobiles and fuels causes massive pollution and hazardous emissions. It also pollutes and damages the physical environment that man depends for survival. The acute demand for fuel and the means to meet the demand have often led to conflicts between communities and states even to the extent of war. The invention and use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction have caused great concern to humanity. It has, in fact, caused more insecurity than ever before. The inventions of deadly weapons of mass destruction make us think as to where we are heading for-towards the end of human civilization, (the end of the world through World War III) or towards a civilization of great insecurity and uncertainties?

### 13.4 Social Change and the Future

One of the greatest challenges of sociologists has been the question of whether future of society can be predicted as those of some natural sciences. Many sociologists have also been attempting to predict the future in their own ways. However, sociologists have not been that successful in this effort. It is, indeed, a difficult task before the sociologists today. There are obvious reasons for this difficulty.

Multicausality of social change and complexity of social life are two of the most important factors that hinder in the prediction of future. Change is caused by a multiple number of events and the exact contours of the future are unpredictable. The combination of multiple causes and its influence on one another is rather difficult to assess and predict.

## 13.5 Explanations of Social Change

One way of explaining social change is to show causal connections between two or more processes. This may take the form of **determinism** or **reductionism**, both of which tend to explain social change by reducing it to one supposed autonomous and all-determining causal process. A more cautious assumption is that one process has relative causal priority, without implying that this process is completely autonomous and all-determining. What follows are some of the processes thought to contribute to social change.

### Natural Environment

Changes in the natural environment may result from climatic variations, natural disasters, or the spread of disease. For example, both worsening of climatic conditions and the **Black Death** epidemics are thought to have contributed to the crisis of feudalism in 14th-century Europe. Changes in the natural environment may be either independent of human social activities or caused by them. Deforestation, erosion, and air pollution belong to the latter category, and they in turn may have far-reaching social consequences.

### Demographic Processes

Population growth and increasing population density represent demographic forms of social change. Population growth may lead to geographic expansion of a society, military conflicts, and the intermingling of cultures. Increasing population density may stimulate technological innovations, which in turn may increase the division of labour, social differentiation, commercialization, and urbanization. This sort of process occurred in western Europe from the 11th to the 13th century and in England in the 18th century, where population growth spurred the Industrial Revolution. On the other hand, population growth may contribute to economic stagnation and increasing poverty, as may be witnessed in several Third World countries today.

### Technological Innovations

Several theories of social evolution identify technological innovations as the most important determinants of societal change. Such technological breakthroughs as the smelting of iron, the introduction of the plow in agriculture, the invention of the steam engine, and the development of the computer have had lasting social consequences.

### Economic Processes

Technological changes are often considered in conjunction with economic processes. These include the formation and extension of markets, modifications of property relations (such as the change from feudal lord-peasant relations to contractual proprietor-tenant relations), and changes in the organization of labour (such as the change from independent craftsmen to factories).

Historical **materialism**, as developed by Marx and Engels, is one of the more prominent theories that gives priority to economic processes, but it is not the only one. Indeed, materialist theories have even been developed in opposition to Marxism. One of these theories, the “logic of industrialization” thesis by American scholar Clark Kerr and his colleagues, states that industrialization everywhere has similar consequences, whether the property relations are called capitalist or communist.

### Ideas

Other theories have stressed the significance of ideas as causes of social change. Comte’s law of three stages is such a theory. Weber regarded religious ideas as important contributors to economic development or stagnation; according to his controversial thesis, the individualistic ethic of Christianity, and in particular **Calvinism**, partially explains the rise of the capitalist spirit, which led to economic dynamism in the West.

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### Social Movements

A change in collective ideas is not merely an intellectual process; it is often connected to the formation of new **social movements**. This in itself might be regarded as a potential cause of social change. Weber called attention to this factor in conjunction with his concept of “charismatic leadership.” The **charismatic** leader, by virtue of the extraordinary personal qualities attributed to him, is able to create a group of followers who are willing to break established rules. Examples include Jesus, Napoleon, and Hitler. Recently, however, the concept of charisma has been trivialized to refer to almost any popular figure.

### 13.6 Industrialisation

Industrialisation got under way in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Cities grew around the new industries. Before industrialisation, we had (i) agrarian non-monetised economy, (ii) a level of technology where the domestic unit was also the unit of economic exchange, (iii) a non-differentiation of occupations between father and son and between brothers and brothers, and (iv) a value system where authority of the elders and the sanctity of tradition were both supported as against the criterion of ‘rationality’. But industrialisation has brought about economic and socio-cultural changes in our society. In the economic field, it has resulted in specialisation in work, occupational mobility, monetisation of economy, and a breakdown of link between kinship and occupational structures; in the social field, it has resulted in the migration of people from rural to urban areas, spread of education, and a strong centralised political structure; in the cultural field, it has brought secularisation of beliefs.

There have been three important effects of industrialisation on family organisation: *First*, family which was a principal unit of production has been transformed into a consumption unit. Instead of all family members working together in an integrated economic enterprise, a few male members go out of the home to earn the family’s living. This has affected not only the traditional structure of the joint family but also the relations among its members. *Secondly*, factory employment has freed young adults from direct dependence upon their families. As their wages have made them financially independent, the authority of the head of the household has weakened further. In the city, in many cases, along with men, their wives also have started working and earning. This has affected intra-family relations to some extent. *Finally*, children have ceased to be economic assets and have become liabilities. Although in a few cases, the use and abuse of child labour has also increased, law does not permit children to work. At the same time, educational requirements have increased, lengthening dependence upon parental support. Accommodation in the cities is expensive and child-care is demanding. Thus, work and home have become separated due to industrialisation.

Some sociologists have, however, recently challenged the theory of emergence of nuclear families due to industrialisation. This challenge is based on the results of empirical studies and the documentation of the variety of family system’, in different parts of the world. Studies by scholars like M.S.A Kao, M.S. Gore, and Milton Singer have shown that jointness is more preferred and prevalent in business communities, and many nuclear families maintain widespread kinties. Several recent researchers in the industrialised West have also emphasised the supportive role of kin and their function of acting as a buffer between the family and the impersonal wider world (Abbi, 1970). Social historians too have shown that the nuclear family was prevalent as a cultural norm in Europe and the United States even before industrialisation. However, it has to be noted that the supportive role of the kin does not have the compulsory character which is found in the family obligations of the Indian nuclear family. The youngsters in the nuclear family still willingly follow the normal responsibility towards the primary kin (such as parents and siblings), solidarity of the close kin, and some sense of unity of the family, even though living in separate households.

All these changes have modified our family system. While the population movement from the rural to the urban areas has led to decline in authoritarian power, growth of secularism has developed a value system which emphasises individual initiative and responsibility. Individual now functions without any restrictive familial controls.



**Self-Assessment**

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**1. Answer the following questions:**

- (i) Is the rate of social change the same for all societies? (Tick the correct answer). Yes/No
- (ii) Modern technology: (Tick the correct answer).
- (a) does neither cause good nor bad things to humanity.
- (b) causes only good things to humanity.
- (c) also causes problems and anxiety to humanity.
- (iii) Mention any three reasons of the difficulty in the prediction of future of human society. (Answer in about three lines.)

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**13.7 Summary**

- Social change is a universal phenomenon that takes place in our lives. Social change is **generally understood** as the process of **occurrence** of **significant** alterations in the organization **and/or** structure and functions of social life. Social **transformation** is considered as a form of social change that occurs in a radical and abrupt **manner**.
- There **are** various approaches for understanding social change. Evolutionary theories hold the view that all societies pass through a similar sequence of developmental stages until it culminates in some final stage. They see social change as progress and growth that is good for the society. Cyclical theories assume that societies pass through a cycle of changes- grow, reach a peak of development and then decay- and **repeats** the cycle again in the same pattern.
- Structural-functional theories view that there is stability and order in the society, but changes do occur occasionally. Conflict theorists believe that conflict **occasionally** arise in societies to correct adverse social developments which outcome would be better than the old systems.
- Social change is caused by various factors- biological (non-human and human), geographic, technological, and **socio-cultural** factors. We also find variant rates of social change depending on various conditions and situations. Sociologists are also concerned about the various impacts of change on human society. While some impacts are commendable, there are several impacts of social change that are **disturbing** and destructive in nature. Then, there is also the question of whether or not social change is predictable. The answer would be yes, but to a limited extent.

**13.8 Key-Words**

1. Bureaucracy : **A hierarchical and formally organised** structural arrangement of an organization based on the division of labour, authority, written rules of conduct, and specialisation.
2. Capitalism : **A socio-economic** system where commodities are produced and owned especially by the individuals **and** competitively sold for profit.
3. Discovery : **A shared human perception** of an aspect of reality which already exists.
4. Industrial Society : **A society in which goods are produced primarily through machine-factory methods** of production.
5. Population Change : **A change in the number of people in a society, or the characteristics of the population** such as age or sex.
6. Progress : Social or cultural change that are considered desirable according to some set of values.
7. Social Movement : **A collective act to promote or resist change.**

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### **13.9 Review Questions**

1. Discuss the factors of social changes.
2. What are the Biological factors? Discuss.
3. Write a short note on the economic and religions factors of social changes.
4. What is meant by demographic factor? Discuss.

### **Answers: Self-Assessment**

1. (i) No                      (ii) (c)  
(iii) (a) Multicausality of social change  
(b) Complexity of social life  
(c) Tempero-centrism

### **13.10 Further Readings**



1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.

## Unit 14: Social Change in Contemporary India

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### Objectives

After studying this unit students will be able to:

- Understand Social Trends
- Discuss Contemporary Social Change
- Explain Economic Development
- Know Industrialization and Urbanization

### Introduction

Families are the fundamental unit of society. While their broad functions childrearing, care, protection, sustenance, socialisation, nurturance, affection and intimacy – are perennial, family size and form have shown considerable historical change. To what extent are these sorts of changes affecting family functioning? Families are embedded in the wider contexts of neighbourhood, community and society, and these are also subject to change. Do these changes, which themselves partly arise from family trends, alter the social and emotional character of family relationships? In combination with wider social changes, do they alter the social and emotional development of children? What implications do such changes have for the relationship between children and their siblings, and with their extended families? Similar questions can be asked of the changes beyond the family – for example, in the extent and nature of relationships between children and their neighbours and members of their communities. What are the impacts of changes in the interactions of children with their teachers, clergy and coaches, among others, that flow from reductions in the willingness of males to enter professions or to join groups involving frequent contact with children and young people? Are there unanticipated consequences for children more generally of social policies that appropriately protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged? Finally, are there longer-term impacts of family and wider societal trends that, on the one hand, may result in greater isolation, lowered empathy and reduced social cohesion and, on the other, unacceptable risks of abuse and neglect that too many children face in dysfunctional families? These are key considerations as Australia frames policy agendas for its children and families.

### 14.1 Social Trends


The place of children is not uniformly advantageous across our communities. In a recent volume, Keating and Hertzman (1999) highlighted “modernity’s paradox”:

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A puzzling paradox confronts observers of modern society. We are witnesses to a dramatic expansion of market-based economies whose capacity for wealth generation is awesome in comparison to both the distant and the recent past. At the same time there is a growing perception of substantial threats to the health and well being of today's children.

Australia, regrettably, reflects this paradox. There is accumulating evidence that the threats to Australian children's development, health and wellbeing are increasing, with signs of growing disadvantage, social exclusion and vulnerability in some communities. About half of the children who are disadvantaged live in single-parent families, predominantly headed by their mother.

The trends in population and disadvantage are interrelated. Birth rates differ considerably by social class. For the least advantaged Australians the birth rates may be double those of the more affluent (ABS, 2008). However, the average interval between generations for the more affluent is almost double that for the least affluent (approximately 29 years versus 16 years).



*Did u know?* A 26-year-old woman has just become a grandmother. She gave birth at 14, her daughter was 12. On the present trend, she will be a great-great-grandmother by the age of 60.

These demographic changes highlight the difference in the proportions of families with young children living in disadvantage or affluence, and mirror the data from elsewhere in the Western world. Not only is there the link to birth rates, but disadvantage also influences the rates of infant mortality and morbidity (the occurrence of health and developmental problems). The numerous risk factors that lead to problems in childhood tend to be, though not exclusively, related to social class.

The interplay of child, family and community factors is also seen in the areas of abuse and neglect, school failure, and criminality, among others (Hayes, 2007). These areas of social concern reflect similar sets of risk factors related to disadvantage, limited parental education, family problems, unemployment and lack of connectedness to community. The impacts on the development, health and wellbeing of children in disadvantaged communities are widespread.

A considerable body of evidence is accumulating on a phenomenon called the "social gradient". The term refers to the increase or decrease in some aspect of development, health or wellbeing in direct relation to social status. As social status increases, outcomes across the range of areas of development, health and wellbeing are higher. These are, of course, population measures, and there will be variation in outcomes with any social status group. The message is clear, however, that social status, including one's relative poverty, are powerful indicators of outcomes both within a development period and across life.

Poverty and family types are also interrelated, with single-parent families being more likely to be in the bottom quintiles of income, again placing children in these families at increased risk of a range of developmental problems. The patterns are complex, however, with many individuals protected if their family is well-functioning and community supports are available.

Irrespective of "social address", however, separation and divorce increase the risk of behavioural and relational problems in children. Although the data show that behaviour problems are present prior to separation, boys are particularly at risk around the time that their fathers leave the household on separation or divorce. The effects of separation and divorce are clearly long-term, as reflected in the consistent findings of increased relationship and marriage problems and higher risk of separation and divorce for adults who have themselves during their childhood experienced the breakdown of their parents' relationship.

The complex, and at times rapid, succession of relationships experienced by many children clearly contributes to their risk of abuse, later behavioural adjustment problems and relationship difficulties. Of children aged 0-17 years, 20% were living in sole-parent families, and 8% were living in either step or blended families (ABS, 2004). Thus, about three in ten children were involved in sole-parent,

step or blended families. Behavioural problems may be more common among children living in such circumstances. In turn, behaviour and adjustment problems also have long-term effects, leading to increased marital and relational problems for the children from families where their parents have separated or divorced. These effects have been consistently demonstrated over numerous studies (see Teachman, 2004).



*Did u know?* In 2003, 1.1 million Australian children aged under 18 years had a natural parent living elsewhere, which represented 23% of children of the same age (ABS, 2004).

The extent of perturbation of relationships is clear in the data on second and subsequent marriages. Second marriages are at higher risk of breakdown, with 54% of women who re-marry divorcing again. The figures for men are even higher, with 65% subsequently divorcing. Of re-marriages, 37% will dissolve after 10 years. The pattern these data sketch are of many children who are living in circumstances that make the formation of stable relationships and the skills to sustain them problematic.

The key variable seems to be, however, family functioning. Type of family seems less important than the extent to which the family functions well in providing models of social and behavioural adjustment. Using data from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, both Racine and Boyle (2002) and Lipman et al. (2002) found that behavioural and social adjustment problems were related to family functioning and became more pronounced over time. Children in dysfunctional families were, on average, 40% more likely to display such problems, as opposed to those living in well-functioning families. They were also significantly more likely to show physical aggression and emotionally abusive behaviour. The effects were particularly marked during adolescence.

Given that as many as a third of marriages will end in divorce, and that, in 2005, 1% of children aged 0-17 years had parents who were divorced, the extent of disturbance of family relationships in Australia is quite marked. The rapidity of the increase in sole-parent families with dependent children is clearly demonstrated. In 1986, these families accounted for 15% of families with dependent children; by 2004, the figure was 20%.

## 14.2 Contemporary Social Change

The feature of unity in diversity in Indian culture presented is but one aspect of the contemporary social scene. The second aspect would be the description of the nature, directions and factors of social change in India. In this chapter, a brief description of this aspect would be given.

1. **Change in Social Philosophy:** Nothing is static in this universe. No human society remains the same for all times. The social change is natural to all societies and the Indian Society is no exception to this rule. Therefore, a historical survey of any period would reveal that alongwith economic, political and ideological changes, social changes are also taking place. In our country, the process of integration and disintegration of states has always been going on. At times, small states came together to become an empire and, at other times, big empires split into small units. This dual process has had its varying impact on the social structure. The formation of big states cemented the unity among people and their disintegration encouraged diversity. The viewpoints in social philosophy in India have always been in a melting pot. It is, of course, a fact that in comparison with Western countries, social change has been much less rapid in India and this truth can be more clearly brought out in the discussion on 'Tradition and Modernity'. However, this should not give us the impression that there is no tangible social change in India, Whenever, any particular viewpoint in social philosophy became ascendant, its rival viewpoint appeared on the scene. For example, atheistic ideologies of Charvaka, Buddhism and Jainism appeared on the scene in reaction against the Vedic ritualism. They opposed orthodoxy and traditionalism. This reaction gave birth to many social changes. Historically, these changes were harmful to the country. For example, the spread of Buddhism eroded into the defense potential and protective capability of the country. In



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order to revitalize the society, the ideology of Vedanta came to the fore. Adi Shankaracharya refurbished in a powerful form the ancient Indian philosophy and its powerful impact virtually drove Buddhism away from its land of birth. In the modern times, there was a social reaction against the long period of slavery to the British influence. In the contemporary India, the thinkers like Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Radhakrishnan, Vivekananda, Rama Krishna and Dayananda presented the ancient philosophy of Vedanta in the modern garb. In this reaction two varying ideologies are clearly to be seen. On the one hand, thinkers like Dayananda revived the ancient Vedic philosophy and the thinkers like Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan tried to harmonize it with the Western thought. On the other hand, contemporary thinkers like M.N. Roy presented a new rationalist outlook under the impact of materialist and naturalist philosophies. This brief analysis clearly shows that the slow change in the ideological structure of social philosophy has been taking place in India and that it has never been so rapid or sharp as to sever the link with the tradition. From this point of view, it can be maintained that the social change in India has been by and large tradition bound.

2. **Change in Social Institutions:** In the Indian Society, we can perceive a constant change in the traditions and social practices. In the spheres of family, marriage, caste system, social, economic and political institutions there have taken place significant changes. The joint families are now shrinking and are now gradually turning into nuclear families. There is also significant change in the system of marriage. The child marriage is now illegal and has become a rare phenomenon. The re-marriage of widow is now taking place. The women have been granted the share in the property of their parents and husbands. Now, they are also free to adopt a child. The spread of education among women has made them enlightened and they are now participating in every walk of life. In urban areas, they have become much more mobile. As women are now stirring out of their homes in order to earn their livelihood, a considerable change in the structure of the Indian society is taking place.
3. **Changes in Caste System:** In modern India, caste system is an outcome of a long period of Varna system which is mentioned in Vedas over the period of its development, it has been undergoing changes. Many castes sprung up in the process of this change and the castes have competed with each other to gain a higher status in the society. In this struggle for supremacy, many castes did succeed in improving their social status. Thus, in the social hierarchy, the status of some castes has gone up, but, on the whole, there is little change in the caste system. The role of castes in panchayats which used to exercise great influence on its members has got diluted somewhat. Gradually, the number of these panchayats has also dwindled. In contemporary India, due to political factors, the castes are gaining in importance and influence, but, on the other hand, the spread of education, industrialization, urbanization and democratic forces militate against the strength and influence of castes. The future form of caste system in India is rather uncertain. But, however, this much is certain that this system has never been constant and same in the course of its history and that it is bound to undergo change in the future.
4. **Jajmani System:** In India, the economic structure of the society was never divorced from the social structure. Generally, the two have been closely inter-linked. For example, the relations between the members of various castes in the rural India are governed by the Jajmani system. Jajmani system determines both the economic and social relations. Under the Jajmani system certain castes are Jajmans of other castes. The relationship of Jajmani is governed by traditions and Jajmanship is transferable also. In contemporary India, on account of changes in the caste system and particularly due to political awakening in the lower castes the Jajmani system is picking up. Now, the relations among the members of various castes are governed not by Jajmani system but by economic and political considerations.
5. **Industrial Change:** The social changes in India have been considerably affected by the industrial and technological changes. In comparison to other countries there is a gap between the social and technical changes in this country. However, as a consequence of contact with Western countries rapid adoption of new techniques of production, communication, distribution and management is taking place. The metropolitan towns of India compare favourably with western metropolises in respect of technical advancement. But, on the other hand, the social relations in India and West are

quite different. Though, social changes have taken place everywhere, but in India, the social change is very slow compared to the Western countries. In the Asian countries, a rapid industrial and social change has taken place in Japan but such a change has not occurred in India. In the struggle for independence our political leaders also gave call for Indianization. The Britishers wanted to encourage industrialization and westernization in India. The Swadeshi movement proved to be a hinderance in this process and an attempt was made to revive old values in all walks of life. The thinkers like Aurobindo showed the superiority of the ancient Indian values and by his powerful arguments silenced the critics. From the political viewpoint, the Swadeshi movement was a progressive phenomenon but in the social sphere it balked the social change and mobility. In the contemporary India, there is a clear trend towards democratization in social change. In the economic, social and political spheres, the values of freedom and equality are getting encouragement. The social control is loosening and individuals are now more and more exercising their discretion and reason to decide what to do. The control of family has also become lax and love marriages are now not uncommon.



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An important causal factor for the disparity between the industrial and social change in our country is political.

6. **Importance of Elite:** In order to appreciate the structure of social change in India one should have an idea about the role of the elite. The elite is under the influence of urban and industrial civilization. The scientific outlook of West has particular impact upon it. Thus, the elite is on the whole working for rapid social transformation on the western lines, but in certain respects it is bound by traditions. Therefore, among the urban society one finds prevalent a number of superstitious beliefs and ritualist practices. Even the inauguration of many scientific councils is marked by performance of Yojna and pooja. Thus, we see in the elite a coexistence of tradition and modernity. An important reason for this type of state of affairs is the broad based nature of Hindu religion in which many contradictory influences coexist.

### 14.3 Economic Development: Its Determinants and Social Consequences

In the study of sociology of economic development, some important questions of sociological relevance are: What is economic development? How does economic growth begin? What social infrastructure is needed for economic development? What are the preconditions for economic change and how can these be induced? Can factors which accelerate economic development be identified? Can social and cultural barriers to economic development be overcome and its pace increased? What are the social consequences of economic development? How can dysfunctional aspects of economic development be checked? In this section, we will try to find out the answers to these questions.

#### What is Economic Development

In the broadest sense, economic development might be viewed as "any growth in real income per capita from whatever source". Bach (1960:167) has described it as "growth in the total output of goods and services in the economy". Novack (1964:151) has referred to a very old definition of economic growth, according to which it is "continuous substantial increase in per capita consumption of goods and services". The substantial consumption of economic goods is possible only when there is substantial production of economic goods, and substantial production these days depends upon greater use of technologies. In a narrower sense, therefore, it may be said that economic development refers to "the extensive application of inanimate power and other technologies to the production and distribution of economic goods" (Faris, 1964: 889). In this sense, economic development is practically equivalent to industrialisation. But to say that economic development is only industrialisation would not be correct because besides involving the use of power and technology in production, it also involves labour mobility, extensive educational system, and so on.

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Jaffe and Stewart (1951), who described economic development as “rationalisation of economic production”, have given a dichotomy of developed and underdeveloped countries on the basis of per capita income and factors like high literacy, high expectation of life at birth and low fertility, low proportion of labour force engaged in agriculture, and high production of kilowatts of electricity per capita. Besides these, we may add a third category to this classification, that of a country which is in between the developed and the underdeveloped countries, that is, the developing country. In terms of the per capita income, the United States, Canada, Australia and western Europe (Italy, France, Germany, England) are considered to be developed countries. On the other hand, South Africa, Mexico and most of the southern and eastern European countries are developing countries. India too, in terms of its per capita income, is a developing country.

Jaffe and Stewart have said that economic development entails changes in everything at once to achieve the above characteristics (of developed countries). But, Robert Faris believes that this conclusion (of achieving everything at once for economic development) is not justified. He thinks that though its proximate measurement will be taken as an increase in real income per capita, yet all other changes would depend upon the degree of requiredness.

### Determinants of and Barriers to Economic Development

The factors that are generally believed to contribute to economic growth of a society are: natural resources, capital accumulation, technology, sources of power, manpower, labour force, characteristics of population and its economic organisation, and social environment. According to Faris (1964:890), the important prerequisites of economic development are: (i) values or ideology; (ii) institutions or normative complexes, that is, unanimously accepting and following the rules of conduct or normally sanctioned prescriptions for behaviour; (iii) organisation (polities), that is, whether the government wants to promote public sector or private sector or both; and (iv) motives (incentives) pertaining to profit/prestige. Gunnar Myrdal (1968:1942) in his three volumes of *Asian Drama*, in which he has analysed poverty and development of the countries of South Asia, has pointed out six important factors affecting development: output and income, conditions of production, levels of living, attitude towards life and work, institutions, and politics. The first three refer to economic factors, the next two to non-economic factors, and the last one to a mixed category. Myrdal has maintained that the economic factors are significant and decisive.

Novack (1964:156) holds that chief criteria of underdevelopment are scarcity of capital, low industrial population and lack of natural resources. On the other hand, the prerequisites of economic development include capital, quality of technology, and natural resources. He further maintains that the factors which impede economic growth in the underdeveloped areas are: (i) lack of sufficient quantity of innovation, (ii) lack of agrarian reform, (iii) lack of discipline, (iv) population growth, and (v) foreign exchange shortages.

Jacob Viner (see, Jean Meynaud, 1963) has also referred to six barriers to economic development. These are: unfavourable physical environment, low quality of working population, scarcity of technical knowledge, scarcity of capital, rapid growth of population, and defects in agrarian structure.

In Europe, the Protestant Reformation paved the way for the rise of capitalism and growth by changing the outlook of society and its institutions. Along this line developed the ‘Protestant Ethic’ which was conducive to economic growth. Writing about this European occurrence, Max Weber emphasised the institutions of capitalistic society that have accompanied rapid economic development in the West: (1) private ownership and control of the means of production; (2) barriers and government price-fixing; (3) the reign of calculable law, enabling people to know in advance under what rules they operate in economic life; (4) freedom of individuals to work for wages; (5) ‘commercialism’ of economic life through a market system of wages and prices to mobilise and allocate productive resources; and (6) speculation and risk taking (which had been largely prevented in the preceding feudal societies). However, some scholars have referred to some holes in this thesis.

### Obstacles to Economic Development in India

The above mentioned factors can also help in understanding obstacles to economic development in India. According to Thomas Shea (see, Jean Meynaud, 1963), the four important barriers to economic

development in India an context are caste, pattern of land tenure, population growth, and property laws (which lead to fragmentation of landholdings).

The basic obstacles pointed out by A.R. Desai (1959:130) are: (a) the social and institutional framework and values inherited from the past (i.e., caste system); and (b) persistence of backward types of loyalties.

The caste system though has been theoretically and juridically abolished by the Constitution of India, yet its significance in real life, its influence on the economic development, its effect upon the patterns of property relations and patterns of consumption, and its impress upon the configurations of power structure in the economic, political, social and cultural fields are still not properly comprehended and hence gravely underestimated. Caste prevents mobility of people so essential for dynamic economic development. It prevents certain groups from taking to certain vocations, certain patterns of economic behaviour, and certain forms of consumption. It has been found that most of the controlling positions in economy, administration and cultural pursuits are monopolised by a few castes all over India. In fact, a few castes control the destiny of most people of the country, leading to caste and regional tensions and social unrest. This unrest becomes the cause of and keeps alive a bitter competitive struggle among the privileged groups themselves as well as between them and the underprivileged groups. This has a detrimental effect on the development of a healthy national economy.

Besides caste (which inhibits occupational and social mobility), some important barriers in economic development of India have been identified as joint family system, communalism, regionalism and linguism. It has also come to be accepted that changes in the caste system have made development possible. Since Gunnar Myrdal had not given importance to changes in social institutions like caste, family, etc., as also to their functional aspects in the analysis of development, his analysis of economic development has been described as negative, patchy and disjointed.

Another sociological implication is the persistence of backward types of loyalties resulting into factionalism and division of the Indian people into groups with petty egos, to the detriment of the growth of a highly developed national consciousness. Some types of loyalties that very much persist (besides the caste loyalty) in India are kinship loyalties, regional identifications and religious attachment. These divisions tend to inhibit the development of a feeling of unity in the society and of identify among its members. The normative pressure rooted in such an environment profoundly affects the conduct of the individual in external situations and relations.

A. R. Desai (1959: 131-32) further holds that this parochial mentality, together with the old outmoded institutions, obstructs the proper economic development in a number of ways: (i) it leads to nepotism; (ii) it results into the growth of the harmful practices of unproductive investment patterns and wrong consumption patterns; (iii) it generates distorted attitudes to work, efficiency, vocations and allocation of resources; and (iv) it obstructs the growth of those mores and sanctions which are basic to a developing economy in modern times, namely, mores and sanctions founded on law, respect for personality, concept of equal citizenship, etc.

The barriers to economic development in India as given by Yogendra Singh (1973) are: (i) transcendence (according to which legitimation of traditional values cannot be challenged); (ii) holism (according to which the relation between individual and society (or group) is such that individual subordinates his rights and aspirations to that of society's welfare; it also means precedence to collectivity over the individual); (iii) hierarchy (stratification in caste occupation and social status); and (iv) continuity (belief in rebirth and *karma*, etc.).

## Stages in Economic Development

Rostow (1960:4) has referred to five stages in the economic development. These are: (i) traditional society, (ii) preconditions for take off, (iii) the take off, (iv) the drive to technological maturity, and (v) age of high mass consumption.

Traditional (peasant) communities are not self-sufficient but dependent on towns for markets, and for religion, philosophy and even government, as leadership is poorly developed within the communities. The decisions for the peasants are made from the outside. Often they do not even know how or why these decisions are made. Try though they might, they can have no part in the making of

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these basic decisions which affect them from the outside. This produces not only a fatalistic outlook towards life but also a suspicion of outsiders and a wariness of new ideas. The distrust of the outside world does not unite them with their neighbours. The extended family draws together to defend itself against the dishonesty of its neighbours. This is one segment of unity with the traditional society. Production in the traditional society is limited due to limited resources, especially land.



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A traditional society is basically agricultural. Its members are fatalistic, superstitious and ignorant of the world outside their community. The units of loyalty in such a society are family, village, caste or ethnic group.

Then comes the process of gradual transition. In this stage, the preconditions for take-off are developed. Generally, these pre-conditions arise from external intrusion by an advanced society. These intrusions stimulate new ideas and feelings and people begin to believe that economic progress is good as well as possible. Some people go for education, some leaders emerge, and some new areas of investments like trade and commerce appear. All this happens slowly because conventional social structures and old values are difficult to change. Before the transition in institutions and values take place, certain prerequisites of social change and economic growth must be present. These are: an awareness of purpose, an eye to the future, a sense of urgency, the need for variety of opportunities and roles, an intellectual appreciation of and an emotional preparedness for self-imposed tasks and, sacrifices, and the emergence of a dynamic leadership.

In the take-off stage, resistances to steady growth are overcome and growth becomes a normal condition. There is accumulation of capital, technological development in industry and agriculture, and the emergence of a political group which takes up the modernisation of the economy as a serious business. New industries expand rapidly and profits are reinvested to yield more expansion. The number of workers increases and so do their wages.

A long interval of sustained growth follows the take-off. During this interval, there is a drive to spread modern technology through an economic activity. New industries accelerate their rate of expansion and production. An important aspect of the drive to maturity is that goods formerly imported are now produced at home. Maturity is usually reached forty years after the take-off.

In the age of high mass consumption, there is a shift towards durable consumers' goods and services. America has emerged from this stage while western Europe and Japan are beginning to experience its joys. Since no country has developed beyond this stage, it is impossible to say what the next stage will be.

### Does Social Change Precede or Follow Economic Development?

One view is that without economic development, change in social system is not possible, while the other view is that it is the change in institutions operating in society which makes economic development feasible. According to Frankel (see, Jean Meynaud, 1963), however, economic development and social change are dependent on each other, that is, each is the cause and effect of the other.

If we are to speak of the effects of technical change, we must be careful to avoid falling into the common error of thinking that changes in "knowing how to do a certain thing" can be separated from changes in "the actual doing of it". The idea that technical change is an exogenous force altering the established day-to-day activities of society springs from this erroneous way of speaking and thinking. It consists in the fallacious belief that society's activities proceed in two separate compartments: the first containing the *process* of knowing, and the other containing the *application* of such knowing. The same thing may be said about economic development and social change, that is, whether the former leads to the latter or the latter leads to the former. As pointed out above, social change neither precedes economic development nor follows it. Both are interrelated. For example,



when there is a change from farming to industry (say, cement industry, or sugar industry, or paper industry, or steel industry), this will involve the development of new aptitudes and new habits of work. If we regard the introduction of an industry as a purely mechanical process which will have certain social consequences, we fail to see that what we regard as the result or consequence is but the continuous process of change itself. Thus, if workers in the industry are independently housed, or suffer deficiencies in the standard of nutrition, education or recreation, now necessary in their new environment, these are not the consequence of the process of change in industry, but rather of a failure to complete it. Even the direct activity of increasing the production (say, of cement, sugar, paper or steel, etc.) cannot be brought to optimum efficiency unless all other economic and social activities to which the task must be related, have been developed. Indeed, an industry cannot even begin until some changes in the previous attitudes, habits and patterns of social organisation have taken place.

Let us take another example of what may be regarded merely as a technical change. Let us assume that it is desired to increase the productivity of land and cattle-ownership of a village community which has never engaged in the production of butter or other milk products, either for sale or its own consumption. It is hoped that not only will this community consume these products itself but will also market some of these as to enable it to increase its income by selling the surplus dairy produce. At first, the problem might appear to be merely one of introducing new methods of production and the tools, instruments or machines appropriate thereto. But, what is really involved is a vast change in social beliefs and practices. Here, let us for a moment consider only what far-reaching social changes will have to be made to enable technical change to be introduced at all. The utilisation of cattle (besides possessing land) as a source of income presupposes a basic alteration in social and economic structures of the community. It also implies recasting of the traditional values of the members of the community. Thus, it suggests a change in the traditional beliefs as to how and by whom the land is to be cultivated, whether by men or by women, by individuals working for themselves or for others. This, in turn, presupposes the growth of new attitudes and patterns of behaviour which will regulate their social and mutual relations. There is also an assumption of the parallel emergence of a group of persons concerned not only with dairy production itself but also with transport, distribution, marketing and finance of all that the new producers have to buy and all that they have to sell. This also necessitates the political structure—local, provincial and even national—suited to the establishment of these complementary economic activities. It further implies the willingness of the community to permit the growth of all legal, political and administrative institutions necessary to harmonize the rights and duties of persons engaged in this new interdependent economy.

The purpose of this long list of social adjustments is to show that whatever it be that we may care to designate as technical change, it is but one aspect of mutually determined and determining processes of growth on many fronts of the social structure as a whole. It is idle to endeavour to ascertain which change is the innovation or cause and which is the effect. Frankel has said that when we take one change as cause and other as effect, we are merely examining the process of change itself from different points of observation.


### **Sociological Problems of Economic Development**

Economic development is not possible without structural change. Scholars like H.W. Singer (see, Jean Meynaud, 1963: 157) have submitted that for the economic development of the underdeveloped countries, industrialisation is very necessary. Poor underdeveloped countries have 60 to 80 per cent of their population engaged in agriculture. Their national income and per capita income are very low. As such, for the economic development of these countries, there are two alternatives: (i) by improving the existing predominantly agricultural structure (that is, changing low productivity within the existing structure); and (ii) by changing the entire structure, that is, shifting away from agriculture and taking to industry development. The choice between the above two alternatives depends upon which of the two approaches is more challenging? To our mind, correct approach is to emphasise both.

As this point, the two main questions arised are: (i) How can agricultural improvement be brought about cheaply? Agricultural improvement is possible by changing land tenure system, and by

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providing more irrigation facilities. Industrial improvement is feasible by extensive re-equipment, and by re-location. Singer (see, Jean Meynaud, 1963: 158) has further suggested that in change from agricultural to industrial structure, the cost of industrialisation can be lowered in three ways: (i) by avoiding urbanisation, which means bringing industry to villages so that there is less demand of transport, water, etc., this will also discourage migration to towns; (ii) by concentrating on industries requiring little capital; and (iii) by applying a technology which uses much labour and little capital. This shows how improving the existing structure as well as attempting structural change is possible. Wilbert Moore (1964) has referred to the impact of industry on social and economic structures in following terms: (i) shift from agriculture to manufacture and services, (ii) occupational specialisation, (iii) division of labour, (iv) coordination of specialised activities, (v) labour mobility, (vi) creation of banks, (vii) extension of market, (viii) change in consumption, and (ix) change in network of social relationships.



*Task* How can the existing industries be improved?

A.R. Desai (1959:127) has referred to four sociological problems of economic development in India: (1) replacing the old social organisation and evolving new web of social relations; (2) modifying or discarding old social institutions and developing new types of social institutions; (3) altering or removing old forms of social control and creating new devices of social authority; and (4) revising or liquidating old agencies of social change and determining new instrumentalities and factors of social change.

The British kept India underdeveloped. Whatever industrial development was made, it was predominantly regulated to suit the needs of British capitalism. Heavy industries were not permitted to grow. While the British retarded the development of India's economy, they also made a dent into social organisation, social institutions, and social outlook of the Indian people. The traditional self-sufficient village community which operated through the institutions of panchayat, caste and joint family and was governed by custom, was almost fatally undermined. However, it was not replaced by a new social framework, a new institutional matrix, or a new outlook. In the absence of these, the introduction of the new legal system resulted in disorganising the then prevailing social relations. The old principle of cooperation and coordination was replaced by the principle of competition which set into motion a whirlpool in the social structure. After independence, the government undertook the task of the reconstruction of economy through Five Year Plans. Economic development has created on the one hand sociological problems (i.e., problems of social relations, social institutions, social control, and agencies of social change) of negative character and on the other hand of positive character.

The negative type of sociological problems are the result of the persistence of old social institutions like authoritarian joint family and traditional religious institutions, etc. These problems have also emerged out of old forms of social control like supernatural sanctions, authoritarian norms, and family, caste, tribal, religious and other customary sanctions. Besides, these have arisen out of the old world outlook which was basically religious, fatalistic and anti-democratic in content. Lastly, these have emanated from large-scale illiteracy, unemployment, corruption, casteism and poverty. The positive type of problems are the result of the policies of industrialisation, commercialisation and monetisation (i.e., introducing the money economy). Industrialisation has uprooted the old division of labour, created new occupational patterns demanding new discipline and a new mode of living. Further, modernisation – whether in agriculture or in industry – has separated man from the traditional processes and techniques of his social units and from the skills he learned from his family. Commercialisation has also created numerous problems. It has brought about a shift in power and authority. Not farmers and producers but land and industry owners and administrators have become the new ruling elite. In villages, the centre of political power has shifted from elders of upper castes to usurers (moneylenders), merchants, landlords and officials. Lastly, monetisation is also fraught

with numerous sociological problems. It has created dangers of greater fluctuation in land values, greater price-spreads of food articles, greater money illusions, and greater proportion of expenditure on non-food items. Besides these dangers, the introduction of money economy has meant atomisation of individuals within the family and destruction of family relationships. Thus, the three processes (industrialisation, commercialisation and monetisation) have generated numerous sociological problems.

### Economic Development, Planning and Social Change in India

The economic development in India after independence can truly be described as a revolutionary change. If we compare the economic development in the British period with the one in the Nehru period of about two decades, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi periods of about two decades, the period of more than six years of V.P.Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Narasimha Rao's governments, about two years period of United Front governments, and about one year period of BJP-led government, the truth behind the above statement becomes self-evident. The industrial sector was overwhelmingly dominated by the British capital. A fragment of the industrial sector owned by Indians was managed by the British agencies. In the agricultural economy, the cultivators were in the clutches of zamindars, jagirdars and local moneylenders (*sahukars*). Savings and investments were very low. Technology was of inferior level. There was no concept of regional balance through enforced backward area development. Foreign capital was not available for building India. Low incomes lead to low savings, which further lead to low investment, low growth, and once again to low incomes. The theory of vicious circle of poverty and never-ending cycle quite fitted the economy of the colonial period.



*Did u know?*

The economic growth in the two centuries of the British colonial rule between 1757 and 1947 remained 1 per cent or even less – a rate of growth so pathetically low that it reduced India to a mere supplier of raw materials and a gaping market for western exports.

After independence, the task for the new government was two-fold: dismantling the colonial economy and erecting in its place base for a modern, independent and self-reliant economic order. The blueprint for the country's modern economy and nationhood – the socialist pattern of society – was provided by the Avadi session of Congress in 1955 (during the Nehru era) and by the Bangalore session in 1969 (during the Indira Gandhi era). There is no denying the fact that the Nehru model of socialism did improve our economy in the four decades of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, though there is a school which decries its (Nehru model's) performance in comparison with the economic growth in South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Taiwan. We have now millions of modern industrial enterprises where there were once but a handful; we have a huge reservoir of technical and entrepreneurial skills; we have big public projects like Bhilai and Rourkela as well as big dams like Hirakud; we have the highest rate of savings in the developing world; we have growth rate of 5 per cent per annum (in 1998-99); we have sustained growth in exports, a twenty-fold increase in the deposits of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs); we have unparalleled credibility in international money market; and we have dropped the percentage of population below the poverty-line (from 51 per cent in 1972-73 to 36 per cent in 1997-98, as claimed by the government after accepting Lakdawala Committee's recommendations). In spite of all this development, it is also a fact that we are faced with the problem of inflation and high debt. The balance of trade deficit is very high and the budget deficit is in trillions.

The Narasimha Rao's government discarded the socialist model in 1991-92 and launched a new revamped model based on the philosophy of liberalisation, marketisation and privatisation (what is now called Nehruvian capitalism), which the Congress government claimed gave a big boost to our economic development. The then Congress government maintained that the essence of the new model was that it combined trust in the state as well as the private entrepreneurs, and held unflinching faith

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in a plural democracy and mixed economy. The United Front government and the BJP-led government also continued this economic policy.

The Tirupati session of the Congress in April 1992 adopted a new ideological paradigm which was a shift from left-of-centre to right-of-centre. It was a technique of discarding Nehru in Nehru's name. It focused on cutting down subsidies to various sectors (including agriculture and public distribution system), discarding licence-permit *raj*, introducing the exit policy, opening the country for multinational corporations, removing import controls, and not treating public sector merely as a job distribution agency characterised by a non-work ethic. Thus, the rhetoric stayed socialist while the content of policies became capitalist with a vengeance.

There are scholars who do not believe that the new economic policy will really rejuvenate the Indian economy. They maintain that our economy can be revived best by imposing curbs on import, promoting exports, widening the tax-net, debureaucratising the public sector, unearthing black money, introducing cuts in defence spending, taking more interest in tapping natural resources, creating a very large market for goods, bringing radical land reforms, and so on. These scholars also believe that country should depend on the internal rather than the external measures.

Sociologically, it may be held that the economic development—both through Nehru and liberal models—has affected our social structures in a direction as we desired it. Whatever sociological model we may use for evaluating our society, viz., evolutionary (assessing evolving of society in series of stages), conflict (emphasising competition and continuous struggle for power), functional (analysing the consequences of each institutional practice for all other elements in the social structure), etc., it will be obvious that change has taken place in the network of social relations, social institutions, social systems and social structures, social norms, etc. People in India are no longer as conservative as half a century ago. They do not cling tenaciously to the moral norms and social values that came down to them from the past. Men individually strive towards individual liberty and collective security. There is also change in their outlook and ideas. They wish for new experiences. They have a curiosity to borrow not only technologies but also cultural elements from other societies. They have a creative urge for innovations. They are not much afraid of the consequences of the acceptance of innovations and social changes. They may protest and agitate against the power elite for failing to mitigate the problems of poverty, unemployment, corruption, inflation, nepotism, terrorism, casteism, regionalism, etc., yet they know that social order in India will never be in a state of disequilibrium. Indian culture, with divergence of interests, will not only survive but develop too. Social change, through economic development, will provide clues and directions to social structures and social behaviour—traditional as well as transitional.

#### **14.4 Industrialisation**

Industrialisation got under way in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Cities grew around the new industries. Before industrialisation, we had (i) agrarian non-monetised economy, (ii) a level of technology where the domestic unit was also the unit of economic exchange, (iii) a non-differentiation of occupations between father and son and between brothers and brothers, and (iv) a value system where authority of the elders and the sanctity of tradition were both supported as against the criterion of 'rationality'. But industrialisation has brought about economic and socio-cultural changes in our society. In the economic field, it has resulted in specialisation in work, occupational mobility, monetisation of economy, and a breakdown of link between kinship and occupational structures; in the social field, it has resulted in the migration of people from rural to urban areas, spread of education, and a strong centralised political structure; in the cultural field, it has brought secularisation of beliefs.

There have been three important effects of industrialisation on family organisation: *First*, family which was a principal unit of production has been transformed into a consumption unit. Instead of all family members working together in an integrated economic enterprise, a few male members go out of the home to earn the family's living. This has affected not only the traditional structure of the joint family but also the relations among its members. *Secondly*, factory employment has freed young adults from direct dependence upon their families. As their wages have made them financially

independent, the authority of the head of the household has weakened further. In the city, in many cases, along with men, their wives also have started working and earning. This has affected intra-family relations to some extent. *Finally*, children have ceased to be economic assets and have become liabilities. Although in a few cases, the use and abuse of child labour has also increased, law does not permit children to work. At the same time, educational requirements have increased, lengthening dependence upon parental support. Accommodation in the cities is expensive and child-care is demanding. Thus, work and home have become separated due to industrialisation.

Some sociologists have, however, recently challenged the theory of emergence of nuclear families due to industrialisation. This challenge is based on the results of empirical studies and the documentation of the variety of family systems in different parts of the world. Studies by scholars like M.S.A Rao, M.S. Gore, and Milton Singer have shown that jointness is more preferred and prevalent in business communities, and many nuclear families maintain widespread kin ties. Several recent researchers in the industrialised West have also emphasised the supportive role of kin and their function of acting as a buffer between the family and the impersonal wider world (Abbi, 1970). Social historians too have shown that the nuclear family was prevalent as a cultural norm in Europe and the United States even before industrialisation. However, it has to be noted that the supportive role of the kin does not have the compulsory character which is found in the family obligations of the Indian nuclear family. The youngsters in the nuclear family still willingly follow the normal responsibility towards the primary kin (such as parents and siblings), solidarity of the close kin, and some sense of unity of the family, even though living in separate households.

All these changes have modified our family system. While the population movement from the rural to the urban areas has led to decline in authoritarian power, growth of secularism has developed a value system which emphasises individual initiative and responsibility. Individual now functions without any restrictive familial controls. Formerly, when man worked in the family and all family members helped him in his work, there was more intimacy among the family members but now since he works in the industry away from the family, the intimacy in relations has been adversely affected. The effect of industrialisation on the pattern of family relationship is also evident from the decline in self-sufficiency of the family, and attitudinal changes toward family. Industrialisation has, thus, contributed markedly to the creation of a new social and psychological setting in which the survival of the early joint family with its authoritarian organisation has become very difficult. The social profile of communities under the impact of industrialisation is indicative of many dimensions of linkages and interactions among segments of region, culture, social categories and communities. It is reflected in migration of people from one region to another which has contributed to increase of bilingualism. The Census of India, 1991 placed bilingualism to about 15 per cent, which in reality has been estimated to be as high as 60 per cent in survey of communities. Interaction and commonality among cultural regions too is reflected in shared cultural traits, which is also true for large number of communities across regions and territories. Such cultural traits belong not only to rituals and institutional practices but also to technologies of occupation, skills and division of labour. Most communities have also moved away from their traditional occupations and show keen awareness of developmental programmes sponsored by the government. This awareness, together with high aspirations, introduces in the social system a measure of tension and conflict now manifest in various dimensions of our social life.

## **14.5 Urbanisation**

**Urbanisation** is the physical growth of urban areas from rural areas as a result of population immigration to an existing urban area. Effects include change in density and administration services. While the exact definition and population size of urbanised areas varies among different countries, urbanisation is attributed to growth of cities. Urbanisation is also defined by the United Nations as movement of people from rural to urban areas with population growth equating to urban migration. The UN projects half the world population will live in urban areas at the end of 2008. In order to explain the process of urbanisation we can discuss the following three aspects:

1. The demographic and spatial aspects
2. Economic aspects and
3. Socio-cultural aspects



Notes

The demographic-spatial aspects of urbanisation deal with shift of people from rural to urban areas, population density in urban areas and change in the pattern of land use from agriculture to non-agricultural activities. Economic aspects of urbanisation relate to the change from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations. As cities have been the centers of diverse economic opportunities, they attract people from rural areas. This attraction pulls a significant section of the rural population to the urban areas. Rural poverty, backwardness of agricultural economy and the destruction of cottage and small industries also push villagers to urban areas. These pull and push factors of **migration** play an important role in the process of urbanisation.

The socio-cultural aspects of urbanisation highlight the emerging heterogeneity in urban areas. The city has generally been the meeting point of races and cultures.

**Patterns of urbanisation.**

**There are following patterns of urbanisation:**

1. **Demographic Aspect:** In India, population concentration has been one of the key features of urbanisation. The percentage of urban population has been little more than doubled from 10.8 per cent in 1901 to 23.3 per cent in 1981. And this has been almost tripled by 2001, when it has been recorded to be 27.8 per cent. The urban population of India as per the 1991 census is 217,177,625 and this accounts for 25.72 per cent of the total population. So far urban population of the country is concerned, only 25.85 million lived in towns in 1901 and by 1991 it increased by more than 8 times to 217.18 million. Out of the total population of 1027 million as on 1st March 2001, 285 million lived in urban areas. The net addition of population in urban areas during 1991-2001 has been to the tune of 68 million where as during the decade 1981-1991 it was 61 million. Urban population has significantly increased in the post Independence period. For the forty years period from 1901 to 1941 the increase of urban population from 25.85 to 44.15 million has been quite modest compared to the 62.44 million of the next decade. There has been an increase of 115.05 million in urban population from 1941 to 1981. Note that 64.8 per cent of this population has grown in the two decades between 1961 and 1981. Similarly the urban population has almost doubled in the decades 1971 (109.11 million) to 1991 (217.18 million). There was a slow growth (and also decline in 1911) in the proportion of urban to total population in the early decades (1901-21). This is mostly because of natural disasters and slow rate of industrial and economic development.

The rapid growth of urban population during 1941-51 has been mostly due to partition of the country and other political reasons, which led to refugee migration in the urban areas. The steady increase in the urban population in the decades prior to 1981 came about not so much because of planned economic development and industrialisation, but due to imbalanced agricultural development. The annual rate of growth of urban population declined from 3.83 per cent during 1971-1981 to 3.09 per cent during 1981-1991. During the decade 1971-1981 the level of urbanisation increased by 3.43 per cent points. During 1981-1991 decade the increase has been only 2.38 per cent. The increase in the urbanisation further declined to 2.1 per cent points during the decade 1991-2001. As a consequence the annual rate of gain in percentage of urban population has also declined from 1.72 to 1.02 during the decade 1981-1991. This indicates that the tempo of urbanisation in India has slowed down since 1981.

2. **Spatial Pattern:** Spatial disparities have marked the Indian urban scenario. These disparities emerged mainly due to regional disparities, imbalanced population concentration and sometimes because of the change in the census definition of "urban areas", to mention about two concepts, namely over urbanisation and sub-urbanisation.

**Over-urbanisation**

Towns or urban areas have certain limitations in accommodating population, providing civic amenities or catering to such needs as schooling, hospitals etc. Beyond certain optimum capacities, it becomes difficult for the town administration to provide facilities for the increasing population. Mumbai and Kolkata are two such examples of cities (among others) which have urban population growth beyond their capacities to manage. This feature refers to over-urbanisation.

**Sub-urbanisation****Notes**

Closely related to over-urbanisation of a town is a feature called sub-urbanisation. When towns get over-crowded by population, it may result in sub-urbanisation. Delhi is a typical example (among others) where sub urbanisation trend is taking place around it. Sub-urbanisation means urbanisation of rural areas around the towns characterised by the following features:

- (a) a sharp increase in the 'urban (non-agricultural) uses' of land
- (b) inclusion of surrounding areas of town within its municipal limits, and
- (c) intensive communication of all types between town and its surrounding areas. Now, we can also look at some of the variations in spatial disparities found in the pattern of urbanisation in India.

**(i) The Growth of Towns and Cities**

The growth of urban towns did not show a unidirectional progress in India. Because of the variation in the census definition of 'urban' areas the number of urban centres declined. Only 1,430 towns out of a total of 1,914 towns existing in 1901 survived till 1961. About 480 areas considered as towns in 1901 lost their urban status because of the new definition of town in 1961 census. It is for this reason that one can see the decrease in the number of towns to 2700 in 1961 compared to 3060 in 1951. For example, in Rajasthan there were 227 towns in 1951, whereas this number declined to 201 in 1981. Similar decline has also been noticed in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. In the 1991 census 4,689 places were identified as towns as against 4,029 in 1981 census. Out of the 4,689 towns of 1991 as many as 2,996 were statutory towns and 1,693 were census or non-municipal towns as against 2,758 and 1,271 respectively in 1981. At the all India level, 93 of the 4029 towns of 1981 census were declassified and 103 towns were fully merged with other towns by statutory notifications of the concerned state/union territory administrations during 1981-1991. As many as 856 new towns were added to the urban frame of 1991. The maximum number of towns declassified were from the states of Punjab (21), Karnataka (19), and Andhra Pradesh (13) and the maximum number of the statutory towns added in 1991 census was from Madhya Pradesh (91).

**(ii) Variation in Urbanisation among the States**

The pattern of urbanisation among different states in India shows an interesting feature of urban domination in some states. Five states namely Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh altogether accounted for 56 per cent (in 1961) to 55 per cent (in 1971) of the total urban population of India. In contrast the six states of Orissa, Haryana, Assam (including Meghalaya), Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland account for 5 per cent (in 1961) to 5.5 per cent (in 1971) of the total urban population of India. In 1991 census some of the states having a higher proportion of urban population to the total population than the national average of 25.72 per cent were Maharashtra (35.73 per cent), Gujarat (34.40 per cent), Tamil Nadu (34.20 per cent) and West Bengal (27.39 per cent). As per the Census 2001, Tamil Nadu (43.9 per cent) is the most urbanised state followed by Maharashtra (42.4 per cent) and Gujarat (37.4 per cent). The proportion of the urban population is lowest in Bihar with 10.5 per cent followed by Assam (12.7 per cent) and Orissa (14.9 per cent). Himachal Pradesh is the least urbanised state. These show that the urban domination in some states continues to exist even at the beginning of twenty first century.

Between 1961 and 1971 the pattern of **urban density** for Indian states shows somewhat similar trends. The states of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Assam and Kerala have densities higher than the all India average of 2948 persons per *sq. km* in 1961. A similar trend was found in 1971 also. States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Bihar and Rajasthan had densities less than the all India average of 2,048 in 1961. The 1971 census reflected the same trend that was seen in 1961, with respect to the above mentioned states. Urban density for Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Assam lessened, during 1961-71 decade, possibly because of outward migration of people. In the

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year 1991, the urban density was highest in the state of West Bengal followed by Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab. States of Tamil Nadu, Nagaland, Jammu and Kashmir, Orissa, Bihar and Rajasthan had densities less than the all India average of 3,370 in 1991 also. Thus, when we look at the census figures we can see that the variation in terms of the urban density continued to the year 1991 almost unchanged.

**(iii) Population concentration in the cities**

The population in the larger urban centres (with 1,00,000 or more) has constantly been growing in India. In 1981 more than 60 per cent of the urban population in India lived in this category of cities. By 1991 their rate reached almost 65 per cent. Out of the total number of towns, according to the 1991 census, in 300 the population exceeds 1,00,000 each. These 300 urban agglomeration/cities account for 64.89 per cent of the urban population of the country. In the case of Maharashtra and West Bengal the share of Class 1 urban agglomerations/cities in the urban population is high, being 77.85 per cent and 81.71 per cent respectively. Class 1 urban agglomeration/cities contribute about two thirds of the urban population in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Meghalaya and Tamil Nadu.

**(iv) Growth of Metropolitan Cities**

In India, Kolkata was the only city with a population of over a million in 1901. Mumbai crossed the one million mark by 1911. Till 1941 there were only these two cities in this category, i.e., with a population of over one million. Delhi, Chennai and Hyderabad entered into this category by 1951. Ahmedabad and Bangalore by 1961, and Kanpur and Pune by 1971. Lucknow, Nagpur and Jaipur by 1981 crossed the one million mark bringing the number of million-plus cities upto 12. At the time of 1991 census enumeration there were 23 metropolitan agglomerations/ cities with a population of more than a million each. The number almost doubled during the decade 1981-1991. Its number has been increased to 35 at the time of 2001 census. At the time of 1981 census 25 per cent of the total urban population was concentrated in the million plus cities. By the year 1991 this has become 32.54 per cent. That means that these cities in 1991 accounted for roughly one third of the country's urban population and one twelfth of the country's total population.

In 1981 barring Delhi which forms part of the Union Territory of Delhi, the remaining 11 cities are located in 8 states. In 1991, the 23 metropolitan cities were scattered among 13 states in India. But their concentration was more in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh, each having 3 such metropolitan cities. Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have two each and 7 were distributed among Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Delhi. In Kolkata the concentration of urban population was higher than other metropolitan cities for the decade 1971-81. This was followed by Bangalore, Chennai and Ahmedabad. The 23 metropolitan cities exhibited quite a diversified pattern of growth of population during 1981-1991. Of these metropolitan cities the highest growth of population was recorded in Visakhapatnam urban agglomeration (74.27 per cent) followed by Hyderabad urban agglomeration (67.04 per cent), both of which are in Andhra Pradesh, The lowest growth rate was recorded by Kolkata urban agglomeration (18.73 per cent) followed by Patna urban agglomeration. Kolkata urban agglomeration which occupied the prime position since 1901 in terms of highest concentration of urban population relegated to the second position in 1991 and Greater Mumbai which occupied the second position since 1901 has been moved to the prime position in 1991. Kolkata was followed by Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. In 1988, while describing the glaring disparities that marked the Indian urban scene, the National Commission on Urbanisation stated two main aspects: (a) while the urban centres in India grew at an average rate of 46.2 per cent during the 1970s, the million-plus metropolitan centres had an average growth rate of population only 29.6 per cent during the same period, and (b) the significant regional variation in the nature of urbanisation process. Indeed, spatially the pattern of Indian urbanisation has been highly localised.

3. **Economic Dimension:** Urbanisation is a natural and inevitable consequence of economic development. Urbanisation accompanies economic development because economic development entails a massive shift of labour and other inputs from predominantly rural sectors to those predominantly urban. The National Commission on Urbanisation of India recognises the economic importance of the Indian cities and towns. It considers “urbanisation as a catalyst for economic development and that the towns and cities despite their problems are for the millions and millions of our people the road to a better future” the various cities in India, that some cities have come up during twentieth century in places where there were nothing but forests earlier. One of the first steel cities in India, like Jamshedpur in Bihar, has provided employment to a large number of people including the Santals who are the local tribal inhabitants of this area. These tribals who were relatively isolated earlier have come into contact with a wide section of Indian population, coming from different regions, speaking different languages, and so on. Besides Jamshedpur, three more steel towns have emerged after Independence. These are Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh, Rourkela in Orissa and Durgapur in West Bengal. Emergence of these steel factories has brought about not only prosperity but has led to the modification of the whole social scenario of this area. Areas that were socio-economically backward have now become prosperous and cosmopolitan. While talking about the economic features of urbanisation in contemporary India, occupational diversification and migration appear to be the key aspects. Briefly examine these aspects.

(i) **Occupation**

The degree of urban-industrialisation and planned development through the Five-Year Plans could not bring about a significant shift in occupational structure in India till 1990. The percentage of Indian labour force in agriculture remained static between 1901 and 1971. In the said period 69.4 per cent and 69.7 per cent of the total labour force was in agriculture respectively. Though the percentage of urban population increased substantially during this period there have not been corresponding increase in the percentage of the labour force in the urban manufacturing, construction and service sector. Things have started improving slightly by 2001. In 1991 around 67 per cent of the total workers were in the agricultural sector. In 2001 only 58 per cent of the total workers have been recorded to be in the agricultural sector. The results from 2001 census clearly suggest a shift in the composition of labour force from a predominantly agricultural to moderately non-agricultural sector. The percentage of urban workers engaged in primary (comprising cultivation, household industry, mining quarrying, fishing), secondary (comprising manufacturing and processing) and tertiary (comprising commerce and service) sectors during 1993-94 is 16.8, 31 and 52.1 per cent, respectively. Whereas the total workforce engaged in these three sectors during the same period is 67.5, 12.0 and 20.5, respectively.

**Percentage of Urban Workers by Sectors, 1993-94**

Sector	Male	Female	Total
Primary	9.0	24.7	16.8
Secondary	33.0	29.1	31.0
Tertiary	57.9	46.3	52.1

There is widespread unemployment among the unskilled and other marginal workers in most of the cities. Again, unemployment among educated classes in urban areas is a peculiar feature in Indian society. It is estimated that 46 per cent of the total educated unemployed are reported to be concentrated in the four major metropolitan cities in India. During the period 1983 to 1999-2000, the percentage of persons in the labour force at the national declined from 66.5 percent in 1983 to 61.8 percent in 1999-2000. The growth in employment for persons employed in the age group 15 years and above on the usual principal and subsidiary status has declined significantly in the nineties vis-a-vis the eighties. And this has lead to the increased incidence of unemployment. There was an

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increase in the incidence of unemployment both for males and females on the whole and in particular for rural areas. In the case of urban areas, however, there was a sharp decline between 1983 and 1993-94 from 5.1 per cent to 4.6 per cent, which has been somewhat eroded by a subsequent increase to 4.8 per cent in 1999-2000.

(ii) **Migration**

In the process of urbanisation in India, migration of the rural people to the urban areas has been continuous and is an important feature. The Urban Commission of India viewed rural urban migration to be “of vital importance for the development of rural areas”. The Commission again points out that besides releasing the surplus labour from the rural areas, for the landless labourers, *harijans* and *adivasis* these cities provide the opportunities, which are enshrined in our constitution. For these millions, our urban centres will continue to be havens of hope, where they can forge a new future.

In India, this increase in urban-ward migration is of fairly recent origin which began in the late 1930s. Of the total migrants in urban areas 20 per cent persons are displaced from Pakistan, 51 per cent from rural areas of the same state and 2.5 per cent from the rural areas of other states. An important feature of the immigrant stream in urban areas is its predominantly male character. Due to the increase of unemployment in the rural areas, surplus rural labour force gets pushed to urban centres with the hope of getting employment. The other factors, which have pulled sections of the rural population (including the affluent sections) toward the city, have been the expectation of a variety of glamorous jobs, good housing, medical, educational and communication facilities.

4. **Socio-cultural Character**

In the process of urbanisation the towns and cities of India have achieved heterogeneous character in terms of ethnicity, caste, race, class and culture. In the urban areas there has always been coexistence of different cultures. Studies show that though various ethnic and/or caste groups have adjusted themselves with each other in the city, they have also tried to maintain their traditional identity. The migrants have maintained distinctive cultural traditions in the towns. Various migrant groups have maintained their own cultural identity. N.K. Bose points out that the migrants tend to cluster around people with whom they have linguistic, local, regional, caste and ethnic ties. A study by Jagannathan and Haldar on the pavement-dwellers in Calcutta shows that they retain close ties with kinship and caste groups for socialising and transmitting or receiving information from the village. Thus, cultural pluralism has been an important socio-cultural dimension of the urbanites. Many of the Indian towns have a “mixed” character, i.e., they are the capital cities, centres of trade and commerce, important railway junctions etc. In these types of cities a “core” area which consists of the old inhabitants. This area is the oldest in the city and on its fringe the new immigrants. The pattern of residence of this “core” population shows a close relation to language, caste and religion. Bombay is cited as an example of this type of city. Lynch also points out that in many Indian cities, especially in the traditional cities like Agra, neighbourhoods have remained homogeneous in terms of caste and religious groups. There the untouchable Jatavs caste is concentrated in particular areas called *mohallas* (ward). But changes have taken place mostly because of politicisation, spread of education, and occupational diversification. But D’Souza noticed that in the planned city like Chandigarh neighbourhood has not been developed on the basis of ethnicity, common interest and other similarities. In this city the religious activities, friendship and educational ties are often outside one’s own neighbourhood. Social stratification has taken a new form in the urban society. It is assumed that with urbanisation caste transforms itself into class in the urban areas. But caste systems do exist in the cities though with significant organisational differences. Ramkrishna Mukherjee demonstrates that people in Kolkata rank themselves in terms of caste-hierarchy. Stratification has also taken place on the basis of occupational categories. For example, Harold Gould (1965) points out that the *rikshawalas* of Lucknow belonging to several religious and caste groups exhibit uniformity in the pattern of interaction and attitudes in respect to their common occupation. Again it has been found that caste has not played a significant role in determining the choice of occupation in the urban areas.



But it is important to note that both the caste and the class have their respective importance based on time and space and situational focus marriage and family are two important aspects of social life. In the urban areas caste norms have been flexible with regard to the selection of mates. There have been increasing opportunities for the free mixing of young men and women. Again the voluntary associations have encouraged inter-caste marriages. As a result there has been more inter-caste and inter-religious marriage in the urban areas than earlier. In the cities many little traditions have been brought in by the migrants and the great traditions have also achieved dimensional change. It has been pointed out that many forms of the great traditions are modified in the modern cities. Milton Singer (1968) shows that “the intellectual and ritualistic approaches to God are being discarded in favor of the devotional approach, which is more catholic and suited to urban conditions in Madras city. Technological innovations like microphone, cinema, automobile, etc. are used in promoting religious activities. Religious activities are not on decline in the metropolitan city of Madras but are being modernised.

### Problems of urbanization in contemporary India

The current process of urbanisation has faced many problems in different parts of India. The most important of these has been the development of slums, in the urban areas. Slum population accounts for a substantial share of urban population in all types of cities in India. Even a planned city like Chandigarh has not escaped slums. The per centages of the slum population in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai are 32, 25 and 24, respectively. Slums are characterised by substandard housing, overcrowding and lack of electrification, ventilation, sanitation, roads and drinking water facilities. Slums have been the breeding ground of diseases, environmental pollution, demoralisation, and many social tensions. Crimes, like juvenile delinquency, gambling, have also increased in number in slum areas. Signs of poverty are most visible in these places. Lack of housing has been another important problem in the process of urbanisation in India. This problem has been acute in cities with over a million populations. Related to housing there have been problems on the planned use of urban land. The lack of adequate housing has been very marked especially for the lower income group and for the urban poor. In the light of the gravity of this problem, the government has passed the Urban Land Ceiling Act, Rent Control Act etc. The National Council on Urbanisation has also recommended that at least 15 per cent of all new developments should be earmarked for the use of the economically weaker sections of the urban population. Absence of planned and adequate arrangements for traffic and transport is another important problem in majority of urban centers in India. Though various new modes of transport and advanced technology have been used in our metropolitan cities to facilitate the movement of the people, these have remained insufficient to cope with the growing population there. Similarly, the extent of facilities medical, sanitation, drinking water, power-supply have remained insufficient in a majority of the urban centers in India. After examining the extent of availability of facilities like housing, transport and traffic, medical, sanitation, electricity etc. in the urban areas, and the growth of urban population, one may say that there has been a tendency of over urbanisation in India. The process of urbanisation in India has also been accompanied by sub-urbanisation. The development of modern modes of transport, and increasing demands on housing has led to the growth of sub-urbanisation. The sub-urban areas are growing at a faster rate in the metropolitan cities like Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi and in all big cities of India. The Urban Development Policy of India has been formulated to ensure that the urban centres play a positive role in national and regional development, to promote the rural-urban continuum and to replace the regional disparities. The Five Year Plans of the government of India have included various programmes pertaining to housing, slum clearance, slum improvement, land acquisitions and development. The Sixth Plan placed special emphasis on development of National Capital Region (NCR) to de-concentrate economic activity from the core of Delhi into regional towns. The concept of NCR aims to bring better regional parities in the process of economic development and social change in a vast area around Delhi. It has been formulated in order to meet the growth and expansion needs of the capital. The plan covers integrated development of about 30,000 sq. km in the Union Territory of Delhi and parts of Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. A statutory body has been constituted through an enactment of Parliament in 1985 and a draft regional plan has since been prepared for the development of NCR.

**Notes**

The resource base of the National Capital Region includes budgetary allocation through plan provision and institution borrowing in the form of line of credit, priority sector loans from financial institutions and market borrowings in the form of taxable and tax-free bonds as extra budgetary resources. The Ninth plan provision for NCRPB was Rs.200 crore and during the Ninth plan the board has envisaged Internal and External Budgetary resources of Rs.3120 crore, to be mobilised from the capital market. The NCRPB has facilitated the development of infrastructure facilities in different cities of the region including roads, bridges, water supply, sewerage disposal facilities etc

**Impact of urbanisation on Indian rural scene**

India, urbanisation along with westernisation and modernisation has furthered the process of rapid social change both in the rural and in the urban areas. One of the important results of urbanisation is the rural to urban migration. Migration has become a continuous process affecting the social, economic and cultural lives of the villagers widely. Rao (1974) distinguishes three different situation of urban impact in the rural areas. In the villages from where large numbers of people migrate to the far off cities, urban employment becomes a symbol of higher social prestige. Villages, which are located near the towns, receive influx of immigrant workers and face the problems of housing, marketing and social ordering. Lastly, in the process of the growth of metropolitan cities some villages become the rural-pockets in the city areas. Hence, the villagers directly participate in the economic, political, social and cultural life of the city. Srinivas pointed out that urbanisation in southern India has a caste component and that, it was the Brahmin who first left the village for the towns and took advantage of western education and modern professions. At the same time as they retained their ancestral lands they continued to be at the top of the rural socio-economic hierarchy. Again, in the urban areas they had a near monopoly of all non-manual posts. However, the anti-Brahmin movement and the economic depression of the nineteen thirties led to the migration of Brahmins from the south and rural areas to metropolitan cities. As a result of migration there has been a flow of urban money into the rural areas. Emigrants regularly send money to their native villages. Such money facilitates the dependants to clear off loans, build houses and educate children. The urban centers of India have become the centers of national and international linkages. At present, many cultural traits are diffused from cities to the rural areas. For example, dress patterns like pants, shirts, ties, skirts, jeans etc. diffuse from cities to the rural areas. Besides these, new thoughts, ideologies are also diffused from the cities to the rural areas due to increase in communication via radio, television, newspaper, computer, the Internet and telephone. The urbanism, which emerges in the cities gradually, reaches to the rural areas, depending on their proximity to the cities.

The process of urbanisation has not been an isolated phenomenon. At present, along with the whole gamut of occupational diversification, spread of literacy, education, and mass communication etc., continuity between rural and urban areas has increased. Urban jobs and other amenities of living have become status symbols in the rural areas. Many modern techniques of agricultural development and many of the institutional frameworks for rural development also generate from the urban centers. The large-scale commercialisation of agriculture has also been facilitated by the process of urbanisation. Similarly, agricultural requirements for machinery have generated the growth of manufacturing units in urban areas.

**Features of urban life**

The following features are generally associated with urban life.

***Formality and Impersonality of Human Relationships***

urban areas prevents intimate and face-to-face contacts among all the members in the community. In urban communities, people interact with each other for limited and specialised purposes, for example, teachers and students in a classroom, buyers and sellers in a store and doctors and patients in clinics. Urbanites do not usually come to know each other as 'whole persons', i.e., they are not usually concerned with all aspects of a person's life. Apart from their family members and friends they do not normally interact with others, except for limited or specialised purposes. This feature among the urban dwellers results in formal, impersonal, superficial, transitory, segmental and secondary contacts.

This is in contrast to the primary contacts of people in villages who share personal, face-to-face, intimate, longstanding relationships with each other.

### ***Rationality***

With the impersonal nature of urban relationships, the urban orientations tend to be utilitarian. That is, people then enter into relationships, after calculating potential gains from these associations rather than for the intrinsic satisfaction of association. Here relationships are generally of contractual kind where profit and loss are carefully evaluated. Once the contract is over, the relationship between the people tends to end, as for example, in having the services of a trained nurse for a sick person, or entering into a contract with an agency to advertise your product, etc. This should however not give you an impression that all relationships between individuals in urban areas are only utilitarian. Always, there exists a wide range of variety in individual relationships.

### ***Secularism***

Heterogeneity of physical such as racial, social and cultural elements in urban life results in routine exposure to divergent life styles and values. People become more tolerant of differences as they become accustomed to seeing others very different from themselves. This rational and tolerant attitude produces secular orientations in life. Even though it is very difficult to measure concepts such as rationality and secularism, it is assumed that secular as opposed to religious orientations have often been thought to be associated with urban social structure. However this feature is not always present since we do find communal riots taking place in Indian cities more often than in rural areas.

### ***Increased Specialisation and Division of Labour***

Population growth leads to a higher ratio of people to land, called 'material density' by Emile Durkheim. He differentiated two types of density, namely

- (i) material density, that is, simple ratio of people to land
- (ii) dynamic or moral density, that is, the rate of interaction, or communication within a population. In his theory of social development, Durkheim viewed tribes or families as the basic social units in pre-industrial or pre-urban societies. When they grow in size both their material and dynamic densities also increase simultaneously. This results in greater interaction between formerly separated social units. Trade and commerce between units serve as stimulus. In other words, when similar but separated social units are fused by increased interaction into a larger and denser settlement, the new and larger units exhibit more specialisation in terms of the division of labour, than that found in some of the previously separate units.

### ***Decline in the Functions of Family***

Many of the educational, recreational and other functions, performed within a rural joint family context, are taken over by other institutions such as schools, clubs and other voluntary organisations in the urban social context. In urban society there is generally a clear demarcation between the home and place of work, which is not always found in rural society. Correspondingly, at a psychological level urban dwellers' identities are not necessarily bound with their family roles. And also because of greater geographical mobility, regular contact between kin is often difficult if not impossible in these families. This however does not suggest that families are not vital in urban societies.

### **Self-Assessment**

#### **1. Fill in the blanks:**

- (i) The percentage of urban population has been doubled from 10.8% in 1901 to ..... in 1981.
- (ii) The rapid growth of urban population during 1941-52 has been mostly due to ..... of the country.
- (iii) Only 1,430 towns out of total 1,914 towns existing in 1901 survived till .....

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- (iv) The maximum number of towns declassified were from the states of .....
- (v) Five states namely Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh altogether accounted for ..... of the total urban populations of India in 1971

### 14.6 Summary

- Families are the fundamental unit of society. While their broad functions childrearing, care, protection, sustenance, socialisation, nurturance, affection and intimacy – are perennial, family size and form have shown considerable historical change. To what extent are these sorts of changes affecting family functioning? Families are embedded in the wider contexts of neighbourhood, community and society, and these are also subject to change. Do these changes, which themselves partly arise from family trends, alter the social and emotional character of family relationships?
- The place of children is not uniformly advantageous across our communities. In a recent volume, Keating and Hertz-man (1999) highlighted “modernity’s paradox”:
- The trends in population and disadvantage are interrelated. Birth rates differ considerably by social class. For the least advantaged Australians the birth rates may be double those of the more affluent (ABS, 2008). However, the average interval between generations for the more affluent is almost double that for the least affluent (approximately 29 years versus 16 years).
- Theodore Dalrymple (1999), the nom de plume of Anthony Daniels, a British medical practitioner, related an interesting anecdote:
- A 26-year-old woman has just become a grandmother. She gave birth at 14, her daughter was 12. On the present trend, she will be a great-great-grandmother by the age of 60.
- The feature of unity in diversity in Indian culture presented is but one aspect of the contemporary social scene. The second aspect would be the description of the nature, directions and factors of social change in India. In this chapter, a brief description of this aspect would be given.
- In the study of sociology of economic development, some important questions of sociological relevance are: What is economic development? How does economic growth begin? What social infrastructure is needed for economic development? What are the preconditions for economic change and how can these be induced? Can factors which accelerate economic development be identified? Can social and cultural barriers to economic development be overcome and its pace increased? What are the social consequences of economic development? How can dysfunctional aspects of economic development be checked? In this section, we will try to find out the answers to these questions.
- In the broadest sense, economic development might be viewed as “any growth in real income per capita from whatever source” (Robert Faris, 1964:889). Bach (1960:167) has described it as “growth in the total output of goods and services in the economy”. Novack (1964:151) has referred to a very old definition of economic growth, according to which it is “continuous substantial increase in per capita consumption of goods and services”. The substantial consumption of economic goods is possible only when there is substantial production of economic goods, and sub-stantial production these days depends upon greater use of technologies.
- The economic development in India after independence can truly be described as a revolutionary change. If we compare the economic development in the British period with the one in the Nehru period of about two decades, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi periods of about two decades, the period of more than six years of V.P.Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Narasimha Rao’s governments, about two years period of United Front governments, and about one year period of BJP-led government, the truth behind the above statement becomes self-evident.
- Industrialisation got under way in India in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. Cities grew around the new industries. Before industrialisation, we had (i) agrarian non-monetised economy, (ii) a level of technology where the domestic unit was also the unit of economic exchange, (iii) a non-differentiation of occupations between father and son

and between brothers and brothers, and (iv) a value system where authority of the elders and the sanctity of tradition were both supported as against the criterion of 'rationality'. But industrialisation has brought about economic and socio-cultural changes in our society. In the economic field, it has resulted in specialisation in work, occupational mobility, monetisation of economy, and a breakdown of link between kinship and occupational structures; in the social field, it has resulted in the migration of people from rural to urban areas, spread of education, and a strong centralised political structure; in the cultural field, it has brought secularisation of beliefs.

- Urbanisation is the physical growth of urban areas from rural areas as a result of population immigration to an existing urban area. Effects include change in density and administration services. While the exact definition and population size of urbanised areas varies among different countries, urbanisation is attributed to growth of cities. Urbanisation is also defined by the United Nations as movement of people from rural to urban areas with population growth equating to urban migration. The UN projects half the world population will live in urban areas at the end of 2008. In order to explain the process of urbanisation we can discuss the following three aspects:
  - (i) The demographic and spatial aspects
  - (ii) Economic aspects and
  - (iii) Socio-cultural aspects

### 14.7 Key-Words

1. Social Change : Change in the social structure and relationships of a social which in often inter changeably used with cultural change.
2. Progress : Social or cultural change that are considered desirable according to some set of values.
3. Social Movement : A Collective out to promote or resist change.

### 14.8 Review Questions

1. What do you mean by trends of change? Discuss.
2. Write a note on the "Contemporary social change".
3. Discuss the role of Industrialisation in social change.
4. What is urbanization? Discuss.
5. Explain the economic development and social change in India.

### **Answers: Self - Assessment**

1. (i) 23.3%      (ii) partition      (iii) 1961      (iv) Punjab      (v) 55%

### 14.9 Further Readings



Books

1. Ahuja, Ram, 1994: Indian Social System, Rawat Publication.
2. Srinivas, M.N., 1963: Social Change in Modern India, University of California Press.
3. Sharma, K.L., 2007: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat Publication.



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