



# ALAGAPPA UNIVERSITY

[Accredited with 'A+' Grade by NAAC (CGPA:3.64) in the Third Cycle  
and Graded as Category-I University by MHRD-UGC]

**KARAIKUDI – 630 003**

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**



## **M.A. [Sociology]** **351 23**



## **SOCIOLOGY OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

**II - Semester**



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(A State University Established by the Government of Tamil Nadu)

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**SOCIOLOGY OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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## Sociology of Indian Society

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## INTRODUCTION

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### NOTES

Sociology is the study of human society or societies. However, such a simple initial definition of the subject poses the question, ‘What is human society?’ There is a difference of emphasis between the singular form of a society and its plural form. ‘Society’, as a singular term, appears general and unlimited. The plural term, ‘societies’, sounds more like a set of container units distinct from each other, such that you can take them one by one to inspect their contents.

In fact, sociology has always studied societies, both, taken separately and together, as ‘human societies’. The balance between the two aspects may vary, but in the end, the study of one absolutely requires the study of the other. Neither of them makes sense independently. For instance, considering India as a society, one can think of it in terms of cities, factories, schools, farms or prisons. One can also think of it in terms of politics, media or divinity. It is simple to connect all these factors. They can also be visualized as confined within the boundaries of the Indian states and referred under the general heading of ‘Indian society’.

This book, *Sociology of Indian Society* has been divided into fourteen units. The book has been written in keeping with the self-instructional mode or the SIM format wherein each Unit begins with an Introduction to the topic, followed by an outline of the Objectives. The detailed content is then presented in a simple and organized manner, interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the student’s understanding of the topics covered. A Summary along with a list of Key Words, set of Self-Assessment Questions and Exercises and Further Readings is provided at the end of each Unit for effective recapitulation.

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**BLOCK - I**

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**COMPOSITION OF INDIAN SOCIETY**

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*Indian Society:  
Composition*

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**UNIT 1 INDIAN SOCIETY:  
COMPOSITION**

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**NOTES**

**Structure**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Racial, Linguistics, Cultural and Religious Groups
- 1.3 Problems of Unity and Diversity
- 1.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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This unit will help you understand the nature of Indian society and its multidimensional aspects. It discusses the various diversifying factors of Indian society and also analyses how these diversities can act as unifying forces, thereby reflecting on unity in diversity. The unit gives an introduction to Indian society and also analyses the complex nature of Indian society with diversifying influences and the common bond which unifies it.

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**1.1 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Explain diversity in terms of religion, language, and culture
- Analyse the significance of Unity in Diversity
- Discuss the various dimensions of communalism
- Recognize the importance of secularism to India

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**1.2 RACIAL, LINGUSTICS, CULTURAL AND  
RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

---

It is often said that there is no other country that offers the same cultural diversity as India. India is indeed unique when it comes to diversity, with 29 different states

## NOTES

each with their own distinct traditions and character, and a population rich with diverse religious faiths, dress and accents. Such a level of diversity could perhaps be found elsewhere in an entire region such as Europe; however, in India this diversity is contained within the boundaries of a single nation.

India is a vast country and from north to south and east to west various cultures have amalgamated, promoting cultural pluralism amidst cultural diversity. It is essential to remember that the bulk of the Indian population represents racial admixture in varying degrees. Racial origins, however tenuous, are a part of the ethnic memory of most of the communities. This plays a significant role in shaping their identity and self-image. In this unit we will discuss the religious, linguistic and cultural composition of India and observe how these act as diversifying factors and at the same time have an underlying unity. Diversity in India is found in terms of race, religion, language, caste and culture. Sociologists say that Indian unity has been both politico-geographic and cultural in nature. The diversities have remained, but simultaneously provided for a mainstream culture.

### Geographical Diversity

India's geography is very diverse and for the purpose of study it can be divided into six different regions. Each of these regions have different climates, different vegetation which leads to different lifestyle and the growth of different cultures and societies. The six different geographical regions constitute:

- The Himalayan region extending from the northern most states to the north east states of India.
- The Indo-gangetic plains comprising of the northern and some parts of the central, eastern and north-eastern states.
- The Thar dessert which is a stretch mainly in the state of Rajasthan
- The Peninsular plains including the Deccan region including the southern states and the central plateaus comprising of the central and mid-western states
- The Coastal Plains including the eastern and the western ghats and,
- The islands comprising of Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep among others

### Religious Composition and Diversity

Indian society is divided into a large number of religious communities. Broadly there are seven major religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. In India, Hindus constitute the majority of the population (80.5%). The Muslims are the second largest religious group (13.4%). The Christians about (2.3%), Sikhs (1.9%), Buddhists (0.8%), Jains (0.4%), and other religions like Jews, Zoroastrians, Parsis, etc., comprise (0.6%). All these religions are further divided into various sects. Though the other religious communities are numerically less, yet their contribution to India's cultural heritage is noteworthy. Table 1.1 illustrates the distribution of different religious communities in India.

**Table 1.1** Distribution of Different Religious Communities in India

Indian Society:  
Composition

<b>Religious Composition</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Hindus	827,578,868	80.5
Muslims	138,188,240	13.4
Christians	24,080,016	2.3
Sikhs	19,215,730	1.9
Buddhists	7,955,207	0.8
Jains	4,225,053	0.4
Other religions and persuasions	6,639,626	0.6
Religion not stated	727,588	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,028,610,328</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## NOTES

**Source:** 2010-11, Office of The Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, New Delhi.

**Note:** Excludes figures of Paomata, Mao-Maram and Purul sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur State.

As per the Census 2011, Total Population in 2011 is 121.09 crores ; Hindu 96.63 crores (79.8%); Muslim 17.22 crores (14.2%); Christian 2.78 crores (2.3%); Sikh 2.08 crores (1.7%); Buddhist 0.84 crores (0.7%); Jain 0.45 crores (0.4%), Other Religions & Persuasions (ORP) 0.79 crores (0.7%) and Religion Not Stated 0.29 crores (0.2%).

All religious groups are further divided internally. The Muslims make up a large proportion of the total population in Jammu and Kashmir. Some coastal districts in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and in Lakshadweep comprise entirely of Christians. Sikhs are more numerous in Punjab. Buddhists are mostly found in Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh and the Zorastrians in and around Mumbai. The Christians are more numerous in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and the North-East Region. They make a large proportion of the total population in the North-East.

Traditionally, different religions have existed in India in peaceful coexistence. The secular nature of Indian society was well acclaimed worldwide. But the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' and the partition of the country led to various communal tensions. Communalism, which is blind loyalty towards one's own religion, has created conflicts and tensions among various religious communities. Politics practised in the name of religion has further aggravated the problem as such politics is based on narrow vested interests. Article 25 of the Constitution gives all religious communities the right to 'profess, propagate and practice their religion'. It is pertinent to know that the right to propagate one's religion was included in deference to the concerns of the minority communities, particularly Muslims and Christians, who maintained that preaching and propagating their faith was an essential part of their religion.

## NOTES

Hinduism is the oldest religion and is divided into various sects and cults. Hinduism is basically divided into Shaivite (worshippers of Lord Shiva), Vaishnavite (worshippers of Lord Vishnu), Shakta (worshippers of Shakti or Mother Goddess in different incarnations like Durga, Kali, Parvati, etc.) and Smarta (worshippers of all the three Gods). Even among these there are further sub-divisions making Hindu religion more complex. Moreover, the Hindu religion has accommodated many Gurus, saints and their followers like Swami Chidanand, Shivanand, etc. Some sects like Satnami, Kabirpanthi, Radhaswami, Swaminarayan, etc., are also prevalent in Hinduism. Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj are also a part of Hinduism. Therefore, Hinduism with its diverse cults, sects, rituals and doctrinal differences accommodates many believers.

Muslims are divided into two major groups, Sunnis and Shias, out of which Sunnis have a larger population than Shias. Indian Christians are divided into Catholics and Protestants; whereas Buddhism is also divided into two, Mahayana and Hinayana based on differences in religious doctrines. The Jains in India are divided into Digambara (unclothed) and Svetambara (white robed). The Jains do not practise untouchability and no restrictions are observed with regard to commensality and social intercourse. It is interesting to note that both Buddhism and Jainism evolved as a protest against the Brahminical social order and the superior position ascribed to Brahmins.

Sikhism is a synthesizing religion and the majority of the Sikhs are found in Punjab. However, after partition there has been a large scale migration and now Sikhs are found almost everywhere in India and even in other countries like U.K. and U.S. Their unique tradition of *Langar* has brought together many religious communities and also inculcated the feeling of community and service to mankind. Sikh places of worship, Gurudwaras, are found everywhere in the country.

The Parsis and Jews in India are small religious communities who have contributed a lot towards the industrial development of India, e.g., Jamshedji Tata who founded the Tata group of industries. The Parsis are mostly found in Mumbai and Jews are found in Kerala and Maharashtra. While the religious composition of Indian society has also resulted in the diversifying of religion, there is no denying the fact that religion has also acted as a unifying force. While most societies grant individuals the right to religious belief, in India communities enjoy the right to continue with their distinct religious practices. Perhaps the most significant part of this is that in all matters of family, individuals are governed by their community personal laws (Larson, 2001). Religious communities also have the right to set up their own religious and charitable institutions; they can establish their own educational institutions, and above all, these institutions can receive financial support from the state. Taken together, these are the ways by which public recognition has been granted to different religious communities and space given to them to continue with their way of life (Mahajan, 1998).

India has many religious festivals which are celebrated amongst all religious communities. Festivals like Diwali, Id-ul-fitr and Christmas are celebrated by all religious communities. Centres of pilgrimage such as Badrinath, Rameshwaram, Kedarnath, Ajmer Sharif and many more attract people from every corner of India across religious lines and strengthen the process of national integration. The tourist places portraying beautiful Muslim architecture like the Taj Mahal, Lal Quila, Qutub Minar, etc., attract people from all walks of life.

### **Linguistic Diversity**

India has always been a multi-lingual country. Language has also been an important source of diversity as well as unity in India. According to the Grierson (Linguistic Survey of India, 1903–28) (the first Linguistic survey during the colonial times) there are 179 languages and as many as 544 dialects in the country. As per the Peoples Linguistic Survey (2010), there are 780 languages of which 50 are extinct in the past 5 decades. The Constitution of India, in its 8th Schedule recognizes 22 official languages with English as an important associate language. All the major languages have different regional variations and dialects. Some of the dialects of Hindi are Bhojpuri, Rajasthani, and Haryanvi. Originally, only 14 languages were included in the 8th Schedule. Bodo, Dogri, Konkani, Maithili, Manipuri, Nepali, Santhali and Sindhi were recognized later. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had remarked, ‘The makers of the Constitution were wise in laying down that all the 13 or 14 languages were to be national languages.’ The languages listed in this schedule have acquired different names at different stages and are better known as the scheduled languages now. The Minorities Commission report and the official Language Resolution 3 of 1968 considered languages listed in the schedule as major languages of the country. The ‘Programme of Action’ Document, 1992 of the National Policy on Education, 1986 considered them as modern Indian languages.

The highest literary awards in the country are given to 24 literary languages in India by the Sahitya Academy, and newspapers and periodicals are published in 35 languages every year. English is recognized as an important instrument of knowledge dissemination, commerce and maintenance of international relations. A provision was made to extend the use of English language in the article 343 as ‘Official language of the Union’ for all official purposes of the Union even after a period of fifteen years with a provision that ‘the President may, during the said period, by order authorize the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language’.

Table 1.2 provides a list of 22 languages arranged in descending order of speakers’ strength. Originally among the scheduled languages, the speakers of Hindi had the highest percentage (43.63%). However, it is noticed that the linguistic regions in the country do not maintain a sharp and distinct boundary; rather they gradually merge and overlap in their respective border zones.

## **NOTES**

**Table 1.2** Scheduled Languages in Descending Order of Speakers' Strength, 2011

**NOTES**

S. No.	Language	Persons who returned the language as their mother tongue	Percentage to total population
1	2	3	4
1	Hindi	52,83,47,193	43.63
2	Bengali	9,72,37,669	8.03
3	Marathi	8,30,26,680	6.86
4	Telugu	8,11,27,740	6.70
5	Tamil	6,90,26,881	5.70
6	Gujarati	5,54,92,554	4.58
7	Urdu	5,07,72,631	4.19
8	Kannada	4,37,06,512	3.61
9	Odia	3,75,21,324	3.10
10	Malayalam	3,48,38,819	2.88
11	Punjabi	3,31,24,726	2.74
12	Assamese	1,53,11,351	1.26
13	Maithili	1,35,83,464	1.12
14	Santali	73,68,192	0.61
15	Kashmiri	67,97,587	0.56
16	Nepali	29,26,168	0.24
17	Sindhi	27,72,264	0.23
18	Dogri	25,96,767	0.21
19	Konkani	22,56,502	0.19
20	Manipuri	17,61,079	0.15
21	Bodo	14,82,929	0.12
22	Sanskrit	24,821	N

N - Stands for negligible.

**Source:** Census of India 2011.

Though all the languages spoken in India are different from each other, yet they may be grouped into four linguistic families; the Austric Family (Nishada), Dravidian family (Dravida), Sino-Tibetan Family (Kirata) and Indo-European Family (Arya). The languages of the Austric family are spoken by tribal people in Meghalaya, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and in parts of Central Indian tribal belts like Ranchi, Mayurbhanj, etc.

The languages of the Dravidian family are spoken in southern parts of India. The dialects and languages of the Sino-Tibetan family are spoken by the tribal people of the North-Eastern region and in the sub-Himalayan region in the North and North-West. People in the Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh also speak these languages. The speakers of the languages of Indo-European family are found in North India. The majority of the people in the North Indian plains speak Indo-Aryan (Indo-European family). Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh also have large population of speakers of these languages.

The degree of linguistic diversity in India is perplexing, not only for visitors but also for Indians. Each of the country's 29 states has adopted one or two of the 22 official languages. India's linguistic barriers are compounded by the fact that each language also has a unique written form, with an alphabet that is unrecognizable to people who are ignorant of that language.

The linguistic diversity found across India stems from a history that saw numerous ancient kingdoms, each with its own language. These languages remained distinct to the area even after a kingdom was dissolved or merged with another. State lines later drawn by the colonial rulers often crossed former political and linguistic boundaries.

After Independence, many of the southern states in India opposed the installation of Hindi as India's national language. Simultaneously, there was a strong lobby across different regions of the country for organization of states on a linguistic basis. This has resulted in the protecting and encouraging of linguistic diversity. The formation of groups based on common linguistics, each with the political rights to administer itself within the structure of the federal system, resulted in that particular linguistic community becoming the majority in that specific region. The recent Telengana issue is an important example where there was a demand for a separate linguistic province. 'Language also becomes a diversifying factor when it is used as a vote bank for politics'. (Kamraj Nadar)

Slogans like 'Tamil Nadu for Tamils', 'Maharashtra for Marathis', and so on further aggravated the language problem.

Although there is a great diversity of languages and dialects in India, fundamental unity is found in the ideas and themes expressed in these languages. Sanskrit has influenced many languages in India. However in spite of diversities Hindi continues to be the national language and people of one State can communicate with people of another State and a national language generates national sentiment.

### **Cultural Diversity**

India is a multi-cultural society and is a fine example of diversity and unity in cultures. India's rich natural resources have attracted many from across the world bringing about great diversity in human cultures. Powerful kingdoms and empires contributed to the shaping of India's cultural regions. The various conquests in the historical past have also been responsible for creating diversity. The bulk of the Indian population represents racial admixture in varying degrees. Unlike several other lands where the dominant human cultures have tended to absorb or eliminate others, in India the tendency has been to nurture diversity, which has been favoured by the diversity of the country's ecological regimes. (Gadgil and Guha, 1992)

From the beginning, Indian civilization has witnessed a pluralistic culture. This pluralistic culture which has its roots in the Vedic period, was enhanced by the upsurge of Buddhism and Jainism, and was further reinforced during the early medieval period, which saw the founding of the Bhakti Movement. Vedic society was an admixture of different cultures. It was a combination of Aryan and non-Aryan, with a mix of tribal elements added. There are many cultures which co-exist simultaneously in India. Communities in India demonstrate commonalities in culture traits irrespective of which religious background they belong to, even though these religious groups are further subdivided.

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Many studies on cultural diversity and syncretism have been conducted by sociologists and anthropologists like Y. Singh, N.K. Das, Madan, Majumdar, etc., which adhere to various sociological approaches like Structural Functionalism of Radcliffe Brown or Functionalism of Malinowski. However, all this research proves that in spite of there being so many contrasts and diversities, there exists an underlying thread of unity which is seen in cultural and regional traits. India has undergone many cultural changes since independence. On one hand, where ethnic and regional groups or castes, tribes, minorities and other groups are fighting for their individual identities, there is a pervasive commonality of many integrative cultural processes. In India we can now increasingly see a rise in 'inter-regional migration' which results in the merging of regional cultural traits, cooking patterns, cultural performances, ritual forms, styles of dress and ornamentation. A sense of synchronization is evolving which helps in dissolving prevailing differences and contributes towards cultural consistency.

Moreover, the role played by Indian religion, philosophy, art and literature in strengthening India's unity is praiseworthy. India celebrates various festivals together which reflect the solidarity of people of India amidst cultural diversity. Thus it is to be noted that diverse societies in India have evolved through dialogue and interactions at different levels. The multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious society in India is the result of a constant exchange of ideas amongst the various groups. India is the best example of portraying various diversities and within this diversity a peculiar thread of unity prevails making India a unique nation.

### Check Your Progress

1. Which Article in the Constitution gives Indians the freedom to practice their own religion?
2. How many languages were originally recognized in the 8th Schedule?

## 1.3 PROBLEMS OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

When India became independent in 1947, freedom fighters and those who framed our Constitution worked on a document which provided for a culturally diverse state. Independent India had to allay the fears of its people and the leadership was urged to keep to its promise of providing equality to all the people of India. Respect for the individual could only come about through respecting the diverse beliefs and traditions that the people represent.

Unity in diversity expresses the opinion that India can remain a strong and unified country while retaining its cultural diversity. As a result of the geographical mobility of people, various parts of the country are found to have commonalities in their ways of life. Religious communities share many common cultural rights but

this does not extend to them having any separate political rights, whereas recognized linguistic communities enjoy cultural and political rights. These rights have simultaneously encouraged diversity and strengthened democracy.

Other areas like judiciary or law are also based on the principle of equality. A single Constitution, a national flag, common currency, national anthem, etc., further strengthen the unity of India. All Indians are conscious that they have a distinct national identity amidst various diversities. The various historical monuments, temples, mosques, churches, gurudwaras attract lot of tourists and reinforce the bond of unity.

### **Challenges of Nation Building: Communalism, Secularism and Socialism**

Immediately after independence, India was burdened with poverty and communalism, thanks to the partition of colonised India into India and Pakistan. The partition created a paramount challenge of integrating India and establishing a secular order. The challenges included building a united nation, which is conducive to the diversity, establishing a democracy which is representative of all the diversified groups of the country, and the most important of them all considering all sections of the society, when it comes to development.

### **Theories and Significance Secularism**

Secularism implies the absence of religion or religious beliefs from the process of rule-making and governance. An organized institution like a national or local government is said to be secular when it keeps religion out of its functioning. Religion is not allowed to be one of the considerations while framing policies and making rules for orderly running of a government and society.

Does secularism then mean that religion is banned from the public domain? No, certainly not. Religion is allowed to be followed and propagated and citizens are free to follow any religion. The State does not interfere in such religious beliefs. But the State itself does not have a religion or religious belief. It exists in a religion vacuum. A secular State does not have a religion and is neutral towards all religious beliefs. Many a times, secularism is defined as a situation in which politics and religion are kept apart.

The origins of secularism can be traced to the Western world view. It is, therefore, important to understand its philosophical base to fully appreciate its connotation, its importance and its limitations. The word secular is derived from the Latin word 'sacularis' which meant, among other things, 'that which belongs to this world, non-spiritual, temporal as opposed to spiritual or ecclesiastical thing'. It is a form applied in general to the separation of state politics or administration from religious matters, and 'secular education' is a system of training from which

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religious teaching is definitely excluded. Philosophically, the term reveals the influence of positivism and utilitarianism.

The relation of secularism to religion was defined as ‘mutually exclusive rather than hostile’. Neither theism nor atheism enters into the secularist scheme because neither can be proved by experience. The term secularism was coined in 1850 by G.J. Molyoake (an Owenite Socialist, an atheist and the last person to be imprisoned for blasphemy in Britain), who saw it as a movement, which provided an alternative to theism. Historically, secularism intermingled with and was at its best with atheism. Atheists like Charles Bradlaugh, Charles Watts, G.E. Forte, etc. were closely associated with the movement. Bradlaugh argued that secularism was bound to contest theistic belief and that material progress was impossible, so long as superstitions born out of religious beliefs and practices remained a powerful force in society.

The essential principle of secularism was to seek for human improvement by material means alone, these being considered as adequate to secure the desired end. Its principles could be sustained by intellect and were equally applicable to all humanity. Morality was seen as being based on reason and as seeking to establish the common welfare. Reason had to be freed from religious considerations.

Western liberal ideas such as nationalism, secularism and democracy had an impact on the Indian intelligentsia, which increasingly incorporated them in its debates, resolutions and strategies of struggle against British colonialism and later included them in the Constitution. Over the last sixty years or thereabouts, many questions, both theoretical and procedural, have been raised. One of the questions much debated and contested in the 1980s, 1990s and the first decade of this century, is the concept of secularism itself.

The tendency to privatise religion and compartmentalize life into the private and the public sphere was never very marked in India, and religion continued to sway the lives of the people. The British Government encouraged the tendency to perceive and calculate political interests in religious and communal terms. In spite of establishing the concept of the rule of law and a common judicial system, the British Government based personal (family) laws on grounds of religious laws and differences. However, in spite of all these factors, it cannot be denied that secularism as a value had a tremendous influence on the leaders of the National Movement.

Secularism is a very important aspect of the Indian way of life and governance. It has helped in promoting communal harmony and in keeping national integration at the forefront. N.R. Madhava Menon in his paper ‘Constitutionalism and Management of Diversity in Multi-cultural Societies’ deals with the significance of Indian Constitution to manage various problems in a multi-cultural society. He points out that secularism is a basic feature of the constitution which cannot be

changed even by Parliament. There is no state religion and the state is prohibited against discrimination on the basis of religion. He believes that multi-culturalism can survive and communal harmony can prevail only when we ensure equality of status among people and equal opportunity for everyone as conceived in the Constitution of India.

Donald E. Smith, Professor of Political Science in Pennsylvania University, provided what he regarded as a working definition of a secular state. This was in his book *India as a Secular State*. The secular State is a State which guarantees individuals freedom of religion, deals with the individual as a citizen irrespective of his religion, is not constitutionally connected to a particular religion, nor does it seek to promote or interfere with religion. The definition given by Smith reflects three aspects of secularism in the form of inter-related relations as follows:

- Religion and Individual
- Individual and State
- State and Religion

These relations are like the three sides of a triangle, touching each other at three points and creating their mutually related angles. These three sets of angular relationship contain the sum total of religious freedom available in a society.

The first of these three angles reflects the relationship between religion and individuals. This relation contains ‘positive freedom of religion’ which implies ‘reasonable unrestrained liberty of believing and practicing one’s religion.’ In other words, every person should be free to follow any religion and to act upon its teachings and reject all others without any interference from the State. Religious freedom is the soul of the principle of liberty enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

The second angular relation reflects the relationship between the State and individuals. It contains ‘negative freedom of religion.’ By ‘negative freedom of religion’ Smith means ‘absence of restraints, discriminations, liabilities and disabilities which a citizen might have been otherwise subjected to.’

The third angular relation emanates from the relationship between the State and its religion. It contains ‘neutral freedom of religion.’ It implies that the State has no religion of its own and has an attitude of indifference towards all the religions present and practiced in the State.

The term ‘secular’ denotes the threefold relationship among man, State and religion. The word Secular has not been defined or explained under the Constitution in 1950 or in 1976 when it was made part of the preamble. A Secular State means a State that protects all religions equally and does not uphold any religion as the State religion. Unlike in England, where the Queen is the Head of the Protestant

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Church, in India there is no provision to make any religion the ‘established Church’ or the religion of the State. The State observes an attitude of neutrality and impartiality towards all religions. It is assumed that the secular state, howsoever constructed, will minimally have to contend with and respond to each of the demands of equality, liberty and neutrality. The liberal claim rests on the impossibility of different religious communities in the same democratic polity to live together in harmony, without some model of secularism that embodies the normative force of liberty, equality and neutrality.

*Random House Dictionary* defines the term secularism as a system of social or political philosophy that rejects all forms of religious faiths. In the words of Asgar Ali Engineer, secularism means liberation of politics from the hegemony of religion. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* defined the term secularism as a belief that morality and education etc., should not be based on religion.

### Theories of Secularism

Secularisation theory explains that as modern society advances, it will become increasingly secular, and religion will become increasingly hollow. Since the rise of science in the 17th century, sociological commentators have realised that religion may be in a permanent decline, and some have proposed that science and intelligence, both rooted in the Enlightenment, are anathema to religious faith. Karl Marx (1818–1883), Emile Durkheim (1857–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920), the founders of sociology, and William James (lectures from 1901–1902) are four eminent men who all noted this decline of religion.

Gandhi’s secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian national movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed based discrimination. The caste oriented stratification of the Indian society has hindered all chances of national unification from the early days of Indian society. The situation was complicated by the presence of various religious groups within the country, who were not ready to compromise on any ground to reach a platform of commonality. The traditional rhetoric of the religious and the self-styled spiritual preachers fuelled these divisions more often than not. It was a great pain for Gandhi that India’s age old tradition of religious tolerance was not being maintained when it was needed the most. What particularly disturbed him was the realization that it would be impossible to organize any nation-wide movement against the common enemy — the British oppressors — if society continues to remain divided on religious grounds. Secularism for Gandhi was an absolute necessity to bring about any form of constructive and all-encompassing political movement.

Gandhi preached his ideals of secularism and religious tolerance across the length and breadth of the country. He showed his understanding of the Muslim

leaders through the support that the Congress extended to the Khilafat movement. Gandhi wrote extensively on the need of secularism in India, and made speeches to the same effect all over the country. It was not the easiest of tasks for Gandhi. The British were bent upon implementing the policy of divide and rule, and it took its worst form after the declaration of separate elections for the different communities in the Government of India Act in 1935. Indian National movement has always been plagued by communal tensions, and haunted it till the very end. Gandhi's monumental efforts at bringing together the various communities in India were not fully realized. The British policy of 'divide and rule' had its effects, and the demand for a separate Muslim nation was fast gaining currency. Gandhi was hurt, but he realized his helplessness. Even at the time of intense riots on the eve of Indian independence, Gandhi was on the roads trying to unite the warring communal factions. Even his death can in many ways be related to his life-long commitment to secular principles.

### **Significance of Secularism**

The importance of secularism to India, and in fact the world, can hardly be overemphasized. Religion is so personal and emotional that it has the power to destroy any society if used as a political weapon. States must keep religion out of the political system to ensure peaceful co-existence. Most modern, liberal democracies have imbibed secularism as the defining characteristic of their political system. There are many religions in the world and the questions that arise at this juncture are:

- Which religion should be followed by a person?
- Can a State compel its citizens to follow a particular religion?
- Can a State have its own religion?
- Can a State give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion?

The answer to all these questions is negative if the State has adopted the principle of secularism. A secular state is neither supposed to compel its citizens to adopt a particular religion nor it can give preferential treatment to the followers of a particular religion. Secularism eliminates God from the matters of the State. This is essential to keep religion in the private sphere.

Secularism ensures that religion does not determine State policy. It insulates public policy-making from the influence of religion and, thereby, eliminates any bias or discrimination that can creep into this process.

### **Theories of Communalism**

Communalism can be conceptualized as an ideology which is based on blind loyalty towards one's own religion and at the same time antagonism against the other

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religion. Such an ideology divides the society into religious groups who have differing interests and their interests are sometimes opposed to each other. Communal people practice politics through religion.

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Historical constructions were clearly part of a more general assertion of community and status by many different groups and classes. What such assertions and counter assertions did paradoxically was to transform the very sense of 'community' and redefine it at every level. In an earlier period the discourse of community had perhaps been stronger, in the sense of being more universal and unchallenged by any other discourse. At the same time, however, the sense of the individual community had also been 'fuzzier'—capable of apprehension at several different levels of sub-caste, sect, dialect and other regional and religious groupings and not greatly concerned with numbers or the exact boundaries between one community and the next. Much of this survived into the late nineteenth and even the twentieth century. But the balance of forces was against its long survival in old form. The new 'communities' were now more often territorially more different than before, less tied to a small locality, less parochial, on account of the changes in communications, politics and society more generally. They were at the same time historically more self-conscious, and very much more aware of the differences between themselves and others, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Pandey, 1990).

It can be said that such a construction of differences culminates in 'communal violence'. Communalism has many connotations. T.K Oommen, while addressing a gathering at India Islamic Cultural Centre, New Delhi on intervention into such problems said that 'these are recurring events nowadays and one needs to look at the root cause'. Communalism and such terrorisms have different manifestations. He agreed that there are six dimensions of communalism and three of them are variants of a political force which are a threat to the State. They are:

**I. Sessionist Communalism:** A religious community defines itself as an autonomous political community, that is, an entity entitled to have its own state. This implies session from the State to which it is currently attached and hence may be designated as secessionist communalism. The Khalistan Movement is an example of sessionist communalism.

**II. Separatist Communalism:** The second variant of communalism is the proclivity on the part of the religious collectivity to define itself as a nation, as a cultural entity with a territorial base. This is often articulated in the argument that in order to maintain its cultural specificity the nation should have separate politico-administrative arrangement, which could be a district or a province within the federal polity. The demand for a separate Punjabi Suba, although couched in linguistic

terms, was essentially a demand for a separate Sikh Province within India. To the extent that the demand is geared to preserve the cultural specificity of a religious collectivity and a separate province is viewed as a tool to achieve that end. Such a kind of communalism is designated as separatist communalism.

**III. Welfarist Communalism:** The demand for a religious collectivity to be recognized as a specific entity suffering from material deprivations, the eradication of which could be met through measures such as political representation, employment quotas, distribution of land, industrial licenses, and so on. In this context, mobilization of the religious collectivity is attempted as an interest group geared to the welfare of its members. Therefore this variety of communalism may be labelled as welfarist communalism.

**IV. Assimilationist Communalism:** This claims that small religious groups are assimilated into big religious groups. The forced conversions are included in this category. Incidents of re-conversion can also be termed as assimilationist communalism.

**V. Retreatist Communalism:** In this kind of communalism a small religious community keeps itself away from politics; such as, the Bahai Community.

**VI. Retaliatory Communalism:** This kind of communalism attempts to harm, hurt and injure the members of other religious communities; for example, killing of priests etc.

#### Check Your Progress

3. What are the three aspects of secularism?
4. Give one example of sessionist communalism.

### 1.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Article 25 in the Constitution gives Indians the freedom to practice their own religion.
2. 14 languages were originally recognized in the 8th Schedule.
3. The three aspects of secularism deal with religion and the individual, religion and the state, and the individual and the state.
4. The Khalistan Movement is an example of sessionist communalism.

### NOTES



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## 1.5 SUMMARY

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### NOTES

- It is often said that there is no other country that offers the same cultural diversity as India. India is indeed unique when it comes to diversity, with 29 different states each with their own distinct traditions and character, and a population rich with diverse religious faiths, dress and accents.
- India is a vast country and from north to south and east to west various cultures have amalgamated, promoting cultural pluralism amidst cultural diversity.
- India's geography is very diverse and for the purpose of study it can be divided into six different regions.
- The secular nature of Indian society was well acclaimed worldwide. But the British policy of 'Divide and Rule' and the partition of the country led to various communal tensions.
- Sikhism is a synthesizing religion and the majority of the Sikhs are found in Punjab. However, after partition there has been a large scale migration and now Sikhs are found almost everywhere in India and even in other countries like U.K. and U.S.
- India is a multi-cultural society and is a fine example of diversity and unity in cultures. India's rich natural resources have attracted many from across the world bringing about great diversity in human cultures.
- Many studies on cultural diversity and syncreticism have been conducted by sociologists and anthropologists like Y. Singh, N.K. Das, Madan, Majumdar, etc., which adhere to various sociological approaches like Structural Functionalism of Radcliffe Brown or Functionalism of Malinowski.
- When India became independent in 1947, freedom fighters and those who framed our Constitution worked on a document which provided for a culturally diverse state.
- Secularism implies the absence of religion or religious beliefs from the process of rule-making and governance. An organized institution like a national or local government is said to be secular when it keeps religion out of its functioning.
- The relation of secularism to religion was defined as 'mutually exclusive rather than hostile'. Neither theism nor atheism enters into the secularist scheme because neither can be proved by experience.
- The essential principle of secularism was to seek for human improvement by material means alone, these being considered as adequate to secure the desired end.

- The tendency to privatise religion and compartmentalize life into the private and the public sphere was never very marked in India, and religion continued to sway the lives of the people.
- Secularisation theory explains that as modern society advances, it will become increasingly secular, and religion will become increasingly hollow.
- Gandhi's secular theories took on a special significance in the particular context of the Indian national movement. Indian society has been traditionally plagued by the evils of caste and creed based discrimination.
- Communalism can be conceptualized as an ideology which is based on blind loyalty towards one's own religion and at the same time antagonism against the other religion.
- Communalism and such terrorisms have different manifestations. He agreed that there are six dimensions of communalism and three of them are variants of a political force which are a threat to the State.

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### 1.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Digambara:** It is a division of Jainism, those who are unclothed or sky clad.
- **Swetambara:** It is a division of Jainism, those who are robed in white.
- **Secularism:** It refers to the absence of religion or religious beliefs from the process of rulemaking or governance.
- **Communalism:** It can be conceptualized as an ideology which is based on blind loyalty towards one's own religion and at the same time antagonism against the other religion.

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### 1.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly mention India's geographical diversity.
2. What are the four linguistic families?
3. What is secularism? Why is it significant for India?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. 'Indian civilization has witnessed a pluralistic culture.' Explain the statement.
2. Explain 'unity in diversity'.
3. Discuss the various dimensions of communalism.

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## 1.8 FURTHER READINGS

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### NOTES

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## UNIT 2 HINDU SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

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### NOTES

#### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Hindu View of Life
  - 2.2.1 Purushartha
  - 2.2.2 *Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha*
  - 2.2.3 *Varna and Jati*
- 2.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.7 Further Readings

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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Hinduism is one of the oldest religions in the world. It is supposed to have developed about 5,000 years ago. It is a religion followed by various racial and ethnic groups and is the most dominant religion in India today. About 80 per cent of Indians are Hindus. Hinduism is a colourful religion with a vast gallery of Gods and Goddesses.

It is impossible to define Hinduism in one particular manner or capture the essence of it in one definition. Our first Vice-President, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, said that Hinduism is not just a faith, but in itself is related to the union of reason and intuition. Dr Radhakrishnan explicitly stated that Hinduism cannot be defined, but is only to be experienced.

In Hinduism, Vaishnavites worship Lord Vishnu as the supreme God; Shaivites worship Lord Shiva as the supreme God; *Shaktas* worship Shakti (power), which is personified through a female divinity or Mother Goddess called Devi. *Smartas* believe in the essential oneness of five (*panchadeva*) or six (*Shanmata*, as Tamil Hindus add a sixth God- Skanda) deities as personifications of the Supreme God. In this unit, you will study about the Hindu view of life which includes Purushartha, *ashramas*, *varna* and *jati*.

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare an overview of the Hindu view of life
- Discuss *ashrama vyavastha* and *varna vyavastha*
- Differentiate between *varna* and *jati*

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## 2.2 HINDU VIEW OF LIFE

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Let us begin our discussion with the perception of Hindu view of life. Hinduism is not one religion but a combination or collection of various sects (a sect refers to a group with distinctive religious, philosophical or political beliefs). It has no central doctrinal authority and many practising Hindus do not claim to belong to any particular denomination or sect. According to Hinduism, the significance of life is four-fold, i.e., to attain Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha.

### 2.2.1 Purushartha

In order to understand the psycho-moral basis of the *ashramas* it is advisable to look into the theory of the *Purusharthas*, which concern themselves with the understanding, justification, management and conduct of affairs of the individual's life in relation to the group, in and through the *ashramas*. The *Purusharthas* or the goals of man are four, i.e., Dharma, *Artha*, Kama and *Moksha*. The *Purusharthas* are regarded as the psycho-moral basis of the ashrama theory because, on the one hand, the individual receives psychological training through the ashramas regarding the use and management of the *Purusharthas*; while on the other hand, in actual practice, the individual has to deal with the society in accordance with these lessons.

#### Dharma

The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit word *Dhri*, which means to hold together, to preserve. Although normal fulfillment of man's acquisitive and emotional urges is essential and desirable, unrestrained satisfaction of such urges is undesirable and dangerous. Therefore, these activities of man should be kept under control. Dharma controls these activities of man by defining the proper quantum, place and season for the right functioning of *Artha* and *Kama* keeping *Moksha* in view.

The social implications and meaning of Dharma as a principle for maintaining the stability of society is brought out by Lord Krishna in the Mahabharata. While advising Arjuna as to what is Dharma, he explains that 'Dharma is created for the well being of all creation. All that is free from doing harm to any created being is certainly Dharma. For indeed, Dharma is created to keep all creation free from any harm.' He further explains that, 'Dharma is so called because it protects all; Dharma preserves all that is created. Dharma then is surely that principle, which is capable of preserving the Universe.'

#### Artha

*Artha* refers to the acquisitive instinct in man and signifies his acquisitions such as wealth and power. It is regarded as one of the goals of man because he cannot conduct his life in its absence. Accordingly, the pursuit of wealth and power is not only viewed as necessary but also as a legitimate and desirable activity of man.

Thus, the Hindu social thinkers have recognized the fact that spirituality in a man can be revealed only when he is economically and emotionally satisfied or content.

### **Kama**

*Kama* refers to the instinctive and emotional life of man, and provides for the satisfaction of his sex desires and aesthetic urges. Aesthetic nature in man expresses itself through the creation and appreciation of fine and sublime things. Man is creative by nature and a free expression of his creative urges is considered essential for the normal development of his personality. Life finds its greatest joy in this act of creation.

Similarly, suppression of man's emotion is not considered proper for the development of man. Hindu thinkers have recognized *Kama* as one of the goals of man. Therefore, *Kama*, even at its lowest expression i.e., sex, has been regarded as one of the aims of Hindu marriage.

Dharma, *Artha* and *Kama* refer to the moral, material and biological resources, respectively, available to man. Together they are known as *Tribhanga* (three classes of needs) and, in the opinion of Manu, good humanity is dependent upon the harmonious coordination between the three.

Of these three, *Artha* and *Kama* refer to man's earthly possessions, while Dharma stands on a higher level. At its lowest level of manifestation, *Kama* is understood to be pure sex drive and is considered to be one of the six enemies of a human being. However, it is also true that a human being cannot conduct his life without these two goals of life because *Artha* provides the material needs of life and *Kama* helps in propagation of the species. Therefore, it is required that *Artha* and *Kama* is pursued in correct quality and quantity at the right place and time in accordance with Dharma. By attending to this Dharma, a person is able to live a proper life even though it may have lived in terms of *Artha* and *Kama*.

### **Moksha**

*Moksha* is salvation and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It also implies self-realization of one's identity. Hindu theology is largely concerned with the issue of achievement of *Moksha*. The *Upanishads* has likened this self-realization to the process of rivers joining the sea. Sound knowledge, good deeds and love and devotion towards God are the ways through which *Moksha* can be achieved.

Thus, the *Purusharthas* are value themes and goals of life, which are arranged in a hierarchical order to be pursued by all individuals and groups. They are concerned with the individual as well as the group. They enunciate and justify the kinds of relation between the individual and the group. They define the just relations between the activities of the individual and the group and they also state explicitly the improper relations, which should be avoided by the individual and the group. The *Purusharthas*, therefore, control both the individual and the group.

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### 2.2.2 Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha

The ideas embodied in the *Purusharthas* find proper expression in the *Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha* (scheme of varna and ashrama). In Hinduism, a man has been considered as a social animal whose life and actions are said to be influenced by the following four factors:

1. *Desa* (place, region)
2. *Kala* (time)
3. *Shrama* (effort)
4. *Guna* (natural qualities)

All the above factors have been taken into consideration while framing the rules for the regulation of human conduct. Though the importance of time and place has been acknowledged, no specific rules have been formulated in respect of these two factors. However, detailed rules have been framed in respect of the third and fourth factors, i.e., *Shrama* and *Guna*. The rules relating to these factors have come to be organized into *ashrama Vyavastha* and *Varna Vyavastha*, which constitute the two cornerstones of Hindu Social organization.

#### *Ashrama Vyavastha*

The life of an individual under Hinduism is a kind of schooling and self-discipline. During this schooling, he has to pass through four stages of life. This four-fold division of his life is known as the *Ashrama Vyavastha* or system. The word *Ashrama* is derived from the Sanskrit word *Shrama*, which means effort or to exert oneself. Thus, the word *Ashrama* by derivation means a place where exertions are made and the action of performing such exertion. Literally, the term *ashrama* means a halting place. In this sense, the *ashramas* may be regarded as the resting places of the individual during his journey towards final liberation.

Under the *ashrama* scheme of life, the life span of an individual is divided into the following four stages:

1. ***Brahmacharya Ashrama***: The first stage in the life of a Hindu is *Brahmacharya Ashrama* or the student life. It starts with a ceremony called the *Upanayana* or the initiation ceremony. Life prior to the initiation is undisciplined and unregulated and without a purpose. The initiation ceremony brings about discipline and self-control into the life of the individual. The age of initiation differs from one varna to another. While it is eight years for the Brahmins, it is ten years for the Kshatriyas and twelve years for the Vaishyas. The Shudra child is not at all initiated into the first stage as he was traditionally not allowed to have education.

During this stage, an individual is expected to be devoted to learning and has to stay away from *Artha* and *Kama*. In the ancient times, the child had to go and stay with his Guru (teacher) in the Gurukul (teacher's house/

ashram) and learn the Vedas during this stage of life. In modern times, this can be equated with the acquisition of knowledge through school and college education. The *Brahmacharya* (young student) is expected to observe total celibacy till his marriage. It is interesting to know that no education was formally prescribed for the young girls.

2. ***Grihastha ashrama***: After completing the first stage of his life, a Hindu individual enters the second stage, i.e., the *Grihastha ashrama* or the life of a married man. This phase of life starts with the marriage ceremony. The aim of marriage, according to the Hindu sages, was Dharma, *Praja* (progeny) and *Rati* (sex). Biological gratification is one of the ends of marriage but the last place assigned to it indicates that it should not be the guiding rule of life. Marriage is more of a social obligation as its main purpose is the performance of Dharma and the perpetuation of the family.

As a householder, a Hindu is expected to perform the *Pancha Maha Yagnas* (five great sacrifices). These sacrifices are as follows:

- (i) The *Brahma yagna*
- (ii) The *Pitri yagna*
- (iii) The *Bhuta yagna*
- (iv) The *Deva yagna*
- (v) The *Athiti or Nara yagna*

*Brahma yagna* is performed by chanting the Vedas daily at home. *Pitri yagna* is performed by offering *Shraddha* to ancestors. *Bhuta yagna* is accomplished by offering food to the *Bhuta*. *Deva yagna* is done by burning oblations to the Gods. *Nri yagna* is performed by receiving and entertaining guests.

The important duties of a householder are reproduction, acquisition of wealth, to educate the children, to help other members of society, to fulfill his own desires within the four corners of Dharma, etc. Besides these, he is also required to repay all the *Rinas* (debts), which he does by performing the *yagnas* (sacrifices).

*Grihastha ashrama* is considered to be the most important *ashrama* because the basic trilogy of Dharma, *Artha* and *Kama* are to be put into action in this ashrama. All the remaining three ashramas acquire totality through this ashrama. Manu is of the view that this ashrama is full of bliss and blessings.

3. ***Vanaprastha ashrama***: This ashrama is the third stage of life and prepares the Hindu individual for ultimate retirement. The householder hands over the responsibility of the family to his grown up children and goes and resides in a nearby forest. He devotes his time to religious pursuits and his family links get weakened even though his wife is allowed to go with him to the

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forest. However, sexual relationship between them is completely prohibited.

It is important to remember that a person in this ashrama is still not totally detached from his worldly life.

4. ***Sanyasa ashrama***: The last stage of a Hindu's life requires him to adopt *sanyasa* and to completely detach himself from this world. He is required to devote his entire time towards meditation and try to achieve *Moksha*. Kautilya said that an individual who enters this stage of life without financially securing his family deserves to be punished. Significantly, the *Gita* does not subscribe to the view that *Moksha* can only be achieved by renunciation of the world. Rather, it believes that the *Karmayogi* (man of action) is also a *sanyasi* (one who renounces the world) and he does not need to formally adopt *sanyasa* to get *Moksha*.

In contemporary Indian society, the *Ashrama* system seems to have lost its relevance. Modern education cannot be imparted through the traditional Gurukul system. It is impossible for a Guru and his few disciples to impart modern education to a large multitude of students in highly specialized subjects. Under the impact of sensate culture, and the strains of modern society, the student cannot be expected to be like the one contemplated in the *Ashrama* scheme of life. The modern student is more volatile and less disciplined than the traditional *Brahmachari*.

Under the *Ashrama* system, the Hindu householder is advised to treat *Artha* and *Kama* as means and not as ends. However, in the present society man cannot but view *Artha* and *Kama* as his ultimate goals of life. Besides, the meaning of Dharma has also undergone tremendous changes as compared to the ancient Indian society. Secularization of the people of this country has resulted in *Moksha* getting relegated to the background.

Thus, *Purusharthas* has changed in the contemporary society with *Artha* and *Kama* taking precedence over Dharma and *Moksha*. Modern man has only two ashramas – *Brahmacharya* and *Grihastha*. He has forgotten the other two because he remains active for a long period and carries on with his worldly affairs. It would be impractical to expect him to retire from life at such an early stage. In view of this, it can be said that the ashrama system has lost its relevance in contemporary society.

### **Varna Vyavastha**

Just as a Hindu's life is divided into four stages and encapsulated in the *Ashrama Vyavastha*, the Hindu society is also divided into the following four 'Varnas':

1. Brahmin
2. Kshatriya
3. Vaishya
4. Shudra

Varna is derived from the Sanskrit word *Vri*, which means choice or to choose. Literally, it means colour. Thus, varna refers to the right to choose one's occupation and also has a skin colour connotation with each varna being associated with a colour. Prof. Ghurye is of the opinion that the word varna was used to distinguish the fair-skinned Aryans from the dark-skinned non-Aryans. He further says that the colour connotation was so strong that when it was applied to describe the four classes as the four varnas, four different colours were attributed to them. Thus, the Brahmins were associated with white, the Kshatriyas with red, the Vaishyas with yellow and the Shudras with black.

The Aryans used the expression *Aryavarna* for the first time in the Rig Veda to signify a distinction between themselves and their non-Aryan enemies, the *Dasavarna*. Prof. Ghurye says, 'In the Rig Veda, the word varna is never applied to any of these classes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, etc.). It is only the *Aryavarna* or the Aryan people that is contrasted with the *Dasavarna*.

The Varna *Vyavastha* is an integral part of the traditional Hindu social organization as it holds society together through a careful division of labour. This system lent order and efficiency to the society and recognized the qualities of the four different groups.

### 2.2.3 Varna and Jati

It is now agreed that all social divisions in India were not hereditary in the beginning; rather they were only functional divisions. In Hindu social organization, *varna* is only the reference category: it is not a functioning unit of social structure, and only refers broadly to the ascribed status of different *jatis*. It is also a method of classification (Dube, 1990). So far as the etymological meaning of *varna* is concerned, it has come from Sanskrit root, *Vri*, which means colour. The *varna* system evolved as a result of the conflict between the different races. Fair skinned Aryans entered the Indian sub-continent through its north-west borders around 1500 BC, conquering the dark-complexioned original inhabitants and, laying the foundation for a class system based on birth. It is also stated in the *Purusasukta*, a hymn in the *Rig Veda*, that the four categories of society come out from the four parts of *Purusa* who is the supreme being. The professions of these *varnas* or groups are related figuratively to the parts of the body of *Purusa*. It is an anatomical analogy between man and society to illustrate the various ranks and functions of different groups.

According to the *Rig Veda*, the oldest scripture, the words Rajanya, Vaishya and Shudra are present only in the *Purusasukta*. The four castes can be classified into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The Brahmins are thought to have emerged from the mouth of the Purusa and are therefore placed at the highest strata of society. Their particular tasks relate to speech. The second level is that of the Kshatriya (Rajanya) who emerges from the arms of the *Purusa* and therefore

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has the honour of handling weapons. The Vaishyas are thought to come out of the thighs of Purusa making their profession agriculture and trade. Last, the Shudras emerged from the feet of the Purusa making them the lowest part of the body, Shudras are therefore placed in the depths of this four-fold division of society.

The *Purusasukta* is apparently the contribution of the Aryans as it came into being after the Aryans had already settled down in India. As the Aryans needed labour to pursue the agricultural tasks, they employed *dasas*. Slowly *dasas* became a synonym for Shudra. Both these words have their roots in the Iranian language. The word *Dasa* is an adaptation of the Iranian word *dahae* or common man. The word Shudra relates to the word *kurda*, which is the name of a pre-Aryan tribe which still exists in Iran. As per the sayings in the *Rig Veda*, the profession of a priest and warrior is considered higher than the profession of the agriculturalist. People employed as agricultural labourers or slaves came to occupy the lowest position in society. The constitution of the *Purusasukta* and its insertion in the *Rig Veda* was the initial effort to organize, and make official the mistreatment of non-Aryans by the Aryans.

### **Difference Between *Varna* and *Jati***

*Varna* and *jati* (caste) may appear synonymous but are two separate categories. The inter-changeability of these terms has created confusion in the sociological analysis of the institution of caste. Caste is a confusing word; in different contexts it has been used to convey different meanings and social categories. It is better to use the term *jati* to denote an endogamous community with a more or less defined ritual status, and some occupation traditionally linked to it (Dube, 1990). *Jati* is a social group, a unit of great importance and a basic component of the social system. *Varna* is frequently mentioned in Sanskrit scripture, *jati* less often. Emile Senart warned that the two terms are confused in the literary tradition which, he wrote, 'is less concerned with the faithful record of facts than with their arrangement in systems conforming to the tendencies of a strongly biased group' (Senart, 1930).

However, the origin of castes has no semblance to the origin of *varnas*, though in the process of development of castes, they came to be associated with *varnas*. Srinivas (1962) holds that *varna* has provided a common social language which holds good or is thought to hold 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 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 top *jatis*. Caste is tied to locality but *varna* functions on an all India basis.

The crucial distinction between *varna* and *jati* is that, where *varna* is a system of differentiation in the epoch of Asiatic mode of production, which was

characterized by general exploitation, the *jati* system developed later in the epoch of feudalism and was characterized by localized exploitation in a closed village economy, where the ruling class lived off the land (Gupta, 1995). *Varna* may be described as an abstract classification of people on the basis of a mythical origin; *jati*, on the other hand, is a concrete grouping based on ritual and occupational criteria. *Varna* should be understood as a symbolic framework within which diverse castes or *jatis* are grouped together. Caste belonging to the same *varna* may have no social ties with each other. For instance, a Kashmiri Brahmin and a South Indian Brahmin belong to the same *varna*, but they do not inter-marry or inter-dine. Castes have regional, linguistic and communal diversities incorporated in them. As a consequence, castes having the same *varna* rank are quite distinct from each other. The *varna* framework has served as a means of caste mobility but mobility is restricted among *jatis*. However, it can be said that *varna* is a reference group to various *jatis* of Indian society.

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### Check Your Progress

1. What does the term 'moksha' denote in Hinduism?
2. Name the four factors which influence the life of an individual in Hinduism.
3. Mention the *Pancha Maha Yagnas* which a Hindu is expected to perform.

## 2.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. In Hinduism, moksha denotes a significant aspect of life. The term implies emancipation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
2. The four factors which influence the life of an individual in Hinduism are the following:
  - *Desa* (place, region)
  - *Kala* (time)
  - *Shrama* (effort)
  - *Guna* (natural qualities)
3. The *Pancha Maha Yagnas* which a Hindu is expected to perform are the following:
  - The *Brahma yagna*
  - The *Pitri yagna*
  - The *Bhuta yagna*
  - The *Deva yagna*
  - The *Athiti or Nara yagna*

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## 2.7 SUMMARY

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- The word Dharma is derived from the Sanskrit word *Dhri*, which means to hold together, to preserve.
- The social implications and meaning of Dharma as a principle for maintaining the stability of society is brought out by Lord Krishna in the Mahabharata.
- *Kama* refers to the instinctive and emotional life of man, and provides for the satisfaction of his sex desires and aesthetic urges.
- Dharma, *Artha* and *Kama* refer to the moral, material and biological resources, respectively, available to man.
- The ideas embodied in the *Purusharthas* find proper expression in the *Varna-Ashrama Vyavastha* (scheme of varna and ashrama).
- In Hinduism, a man has been considered as a social animal whose life and actions are said to be influenced by the following four factors:
  - o *Desa* (place, region)
  - o *Kala* (time)
  - o *Shrama* (effort)
  - o *Guna* (natural qualities)
- The life of an individual under Hinduism is a kind of schooling and self-discipline. During this schooling, he has to pass through four stages of life.
- After completing the first stage of his life, a Hindu individual enters the second stage, i.e., the *Grihastha ashrama* or the life of a married man. This phase of life starts with the marriage ceremony.
- The last stage of a Hindu's life requires him to adopt *sanyasa* and to completely detach himself from this world. He is required to devote his entire time towards meditation and try to achieve *Moksha*.
- Prof. Ghurye is of the opinion that the word varna was used to distinguish the fair-skinned Aryans from the dark-skinned non-Aryans.
- The Varna *Vyavastha* is an integral part of the traditional Hindu social organization as it holds society together through a careful division of labour. This system lent order and efficiency to the society and recognized the qualities of the four different groups.
- According to the *Rig Veda*, the oldest scripture, the words Rajanya, Vaishya and Shudra are present only in the *Purusasukta*. The four castes can be classified into Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.
- The *Purusasukta* is apparently the contribution of the Aryans as it came into being after the Aryans had already settled down in India. As the Aryans needed labour to pursue the agricultural tasks, they employed *dasas*. Slowly *dasas* became a synonym for Shudra.

- However, the origin of castes has no semblance to the origin of *varnas*, though in the process of development of castes, they came to be associated with *varnas*.
- The crucial distinction between *varna* and *jati* is that, where *varna* is a system of differentiation in the epoch of Asiatic mode of production, which was characterized by general exploitation, the *jati* system developed later in the epoch of feudalism and was characterized by localized exploitation in a closed village economy, where the ruling class lived off the land (Gupta, 1995).
- The *varna* framework has served as a means of caste mobility but mobility is restricted among *jatis*. However, it can be said that *varna* is a reference group to various *jatis* of Indian society.

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### 2.5 KEY WORDS

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- **Dasavarna:** It is the collective name given to the non-Aryans who were defeated and enslaved by the Aryans.
- **Acquisitive:** It means excessively interested in acquiring money or material things.
- **Varna:** It is a system of differentiation in the epoch of Asiatic mode of production, which was characterized by general exploitation.

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### 2.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the Hindu view of life.
2. Briefly mention *Varna Vyavastha*.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the various stages of *Ashrama Vyavastha*.
2. Differentiate between *varna* and *jati*.

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### 2.7 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 3 CASTE SYSTEM

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### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Definition, Structure, Functions and Sanctions of the Caste System
  - 3.2.1 Definition
  - 3.2.2 Origin and Structure of the Caste System
  - 3.2.3 Characteristics, Sanctions and Functions of Caste System
- 3.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 Key Words
- 3.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.7 Further Readings

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### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

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India has been considered as one of the most divided of all known societies in the history of mankind. Stratification is the organizing of society according to the different social status of individuals. The traditional methods of the stratification of society in India have unique characteristics, and these have been studied by scholars throughout the world. The caste system, with its various levels of superior castes and subordinate castes and its many customs and taboos, is responsible for awarding India the dubious honour of being the most divided society in the world. Caste is a notion of social order that entails a closed system which is ordained in hierarchy. The basic premise of caste as a social institution is built around inequality and humiliation. It is ordered in a fashion which has power to control and it necessarily exhibit violence of various kinds like discrimination, humiliation and exclusion. In this unit, you will study the about the definition, structure, theories on origin, characteristics, sanctions and functions of the Indian caste system.

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### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the theories on the origin of the Indian caste system
- List the characteristics of the Indian caste system
- Examine the structure of the Indian caste system
- State the sanctions and functions of the Indian caste system



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## 3.2 DEFINITION, STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS AND SANCTIONS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

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Caste is an ancient social institution that has been a part of Indian history and culture for centuries. It is an institution uniquely associated with the Indian sub-continent and hence is of indigenous nature. The term ‘caste’ owes its origin to the Portuguese word *casta* meaning race, pure breed, etc. In India, caste is termed as *jati*. Theoretically, the caste system can be understood as the combination of two sets of principles — one based on difference and separation and the other on wholism and hierarchy.

#### 3.2.1 Definition

M.N. Srinivas, in his book *Caste in Modern India*, provides a sociological definition of the caste system. To him, a sociologist would define a caste as a hereditary, endogamous, usually localized group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. He further stated that relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of purity and pollution, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within caste. Irawati Karve, in her book *Hindu Society: An Interpretation*, says that ‘The Indian caste society is a society made of semi-independent units, each having its own traditional pattern of behaviour. This has resulted in a multiplicity of norms and behaviour, the existence of which has found a justification in a religious and philosophical system’. Accordingly, Hindu religion is intrinsic in the particular stratification found in caste.

Many Western and Indian scholars have studied caste system and have tried to define it. Sir Herbert Risley defined caste as ‘a collection of families, or group of families, bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.’ C.H. Cooley stated, ‘when a class is somewhat strictly hereditary, we may call it a caste.’ However, the above views reflect that caste is usually a group of people having similarity with regard to race, occupation, and lineage, etc., and this institution is hierarchical in nature.

On the basis of combination of two dichotomous propositions (structural and cultural), we can get four approaches on the caste system,—*structural universalistic*, *structural pluralistic*, *cultural universalistic* and *cultural particularistic*. The structural universalistic view is promoted by K. Davis, N.K. Bose and A.R. Desai. They are of the view that caste in India manifests the general principle of a closed form of social stratification based on hierarchy. The structural particularistic view on caste is promoted by E. Leach, who contends that the use

of the word caste is to define the system of social stratification found in traditional Indian society and also surviving to a greater extent in modern India. The cultural universalistic view of caste is held by Weber and Ghurye, who consider caste a cultural phenomenon, a matter of ideology and value system. Caste System promotes the idea of hierarchy. The cultural particularistic view of caste is held by Louis Dumont. He says that caste system is based upon a set of ideas like pollution and purity and these ideas are unique to India.

### 3.2.2 Origin and Structure of the Caste System

To understand the origin of caste system, we need to have an eclectic approach towards the various theories propounded in sociology. The explanation on caste system on the basis of these theories is as follows:

- I. Traditional Theory:** According to traditional theory, the caste system was created by the creator, Brahma, himself. According to *Rig Veda*, Brahmins are like the mouth, Kshatriyas are like the arms, Vaishyas are like the stomach, and the Shudras like the feet of the social body.
- II. Political Theory:** According to this theory of caste, the caste system in India happens to be the Brahmin progeny of Indo-Aryan culture, which developed in the Indo-Gangetic Plains. The Political Theory was propounded by Abbe Dubois in 12th century, in his work *Hindu Manners and Customs*, where he declared caste to be ‘the scheming of the Brahmins’. Thus, as per this theory, caste system was invented in order to dominate the entire Hindu society by the higher castes.
- III. Economic/Occupational Theory:** While explaining the origin of caste system in India, Nesfield stated, “function and function alone is responsible for the origin of caste system”. Even ancient Hindu traditions support this theory. In *Bhagwat Gita*, Lord Krishna pointed out that the fourfold Varna system was created by the God himself. Buddhist literature mentions about the existence of many castes according to occupational distinctions in various crafts and industries. Occupations in most of the castes in Hindu society were fixed. For example, *lohar, sunar, chamar, julaha* signified the economic occupations of these castes. Critics point out that the Economic/Occupational Theory does not explain the hierarchy in caste system and variation in caste of agricultural workers.
- IV. Ethical Theory:** This theory was propounded by S.C. Roy. According to the Ethical Theory, caste system originated in the class system of Indo Aryans, the tribal system of pre-Dravidians and conflicts among various occupations.
- V. Ethnic Theory:** As the name suggest, as per this theory castes are ethnic groups. Risley pointed out that the Aryans gave a lower place in society to the Dravidians due to their different nasal structure, and thus the latter were

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labelled as lower castes. According to G.S. Ghurye, the caste system was a clever scheme of the Brahmins to maintain their hold on Hindu society. D.N. Majumdar held the view that the aim of caste system was to maintain the purity of blood. In his own words: “Nesfield said that superiority or inferiority of occupation is represented in the hierarchy of the castes. We should think that the status of the caste depends upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the social groups.”

**VI. Theory of Mana:** According to J.H. Hutton, the caste system originated in the religious customs and rituals of the non-Aryan groups, particularly in the theory of Mana (the mystic power). Hutton stated that the traditions of endogamy, untouchability, and so on, have their roots in defence against the influence of Mana. But the theory does not state how the belief in Mana created caste system only in India, when the belief existed among all the primitive tribes around the world.

**VII. Theory of Occupational Classes:** Denzil Ibbeston, in *Punjab Castes*, maintained the caste system originated due to distinctions in tribes, occupational guilds and religion. The tribes following different occupations created different castes. In ancient India, the occupations held by the Brahmins and Kshatriyas were considered to be best and the highest. Gradually, occupations became hereditary and led to custom of endogamy. These ultimately led to the formation of hundreds of castes in India.

**VIII. Religious Theory:** The propounders of this theory of caste system were Hocart and Senart. According to Hocart, the division of labour in Indian society is based upon the religious principles and customs since in ancient India *dharma* occupied the most important place. The king was considered as the representative of God. The administrative system, therefore, drew its authority from divine power. Therefore, the religious priests were given the highest status in caste system. Gradually, various social groups hardened into different castes on the basis of religious customs and traditions. Senart explained the origin of caste system on the basis of taboos concerning food. He pointed out that there were restrictions upon taking food with members of other castes as their systems of worship and their family deities were different. Persons worshipping one deity were considered to be descendents of the same ancestors. They used to offer different types of food to their various deities. These practices gradually led to distinctions among various religious groups, which ultimately led to the creation of caste system.

The different factors pointed out by all the above mentioned theories on origin of caste system may be taken together to arrive at the multi-sided explanation

on caste system. In words of J.H.Hutton: “It is urged emphatically that the Indian caste system is the natural result of the interaction of a number of geographical, social, political, religious and economic factors not elsewhere found in conjunction.”

### 3.2.3 Characteristics, Sanctions and Functions of Caste System

Caste system in India is complex in nature. Scholars such as Ghurye, Hutton and Ketkar have pointed out the characteristics of caste. Ketkar describes two characteristics of caste. They are, (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and include all persons so born, (ii) the membership is forbidden by an inexorable social law to men outside the group. From this, it can be said that if a man should be banned from his caste for some reason, he would be without any group, since no other group, lower or higher, could accept him into its membership. Moreover, it also limits the choice of field of marriage partners. G.S. Ghurye, in his book *Caste and Race in India*, has identified six characteristics of a caste system.

I. **Segmental division of society:** The caste system exhibits a segmental division which shows that the groups are divided into various groups called castes. Each of these castes is a well-developed social group, the membership of which is based on birth. Since membership is based on birth, mobility from one caste to another is impossible. Each caste has its own traditional social status, occupation, customs, rules and regulations. It has its own governing body called the Caste or Jati Panchayat, which enforces caste rules. Such panchayats decide not only matters pertaining to castes but other offences as well that legitimately falls within judicial process. These include matters like eating, drinking, matters related to marriage, non-payment of debts, breach of customs peculiar to a caste, petty assaults, etc. Caste was thus a group, as Ghurye rightly points out: with a separate arrangement for meting out justice to its members apart from that of the community as a whole, within which caste was included as only one of the groups. Hence the members of a caste ceased to be members of a community as a whole, as far as that part of their morals which is regulated by law.

In other words, it can be said that ‘each caste is its own ruler’. The citizens owe their moral allegiance to the caste first, rather than to the community as a whole.

II. **Hierarchy:** Each caste is placed in a position of the society according to a hierarchical pattern. The divisions of caste can be noted by watching the actions of higher castes. Castes are never equal in status and one caste has either a low or high status in comparison to another. Ghurye pointed out

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that 'there are as many as two hundred castes which can be grouped in classes whose gradation is largely acknowledged by all'. But order of social precedence among individual castes of any class cannot be made definite, because not only is there no ungrudging acceptance of such ranks but also the ideas of the people on this point are very nebulous and uncertain. For instance, rank of certain castes can be determined by finding out from whom a designated caste takes water. One may take water from his equals or superiors, but not from his inferiors unless it is served in a brass pot.

III. **Restrictions on commensality and social intercourse:** Every caste imposes restrictions on its members with regard to food, drink and social intercourse. Food is another rank indicator. Indian food is placed into two groups. *Pakka* food and *kachha* food. *Pakka khana* is made with clarified butter from flour, sugar and sweet meats, while *kachha khana* is cooked with water or salt. *Pakka khana* is taken from most inferiors, but *kachha khana* is taken with discrimination. A man will take *kachha khana* from the same people from whom he will take water. In practice, most castes seem to have no objection on taking *kachha* food from the hands of a Brahmin. A Brahmin, on the contrary, does not accept *kachha* food from the hands of any other caste. As far as *pakka* food or *pakka khana* is concerned, a Brahmin can take food from the hands of a few castes only. According to Ghurye, as many as 36 out of 76 castes of UP take *kachha* food from only their own members and none others.

Besides, there are widespread beliefs of pollution by touch which require the members of different castes to maintain social distances from one another. Theoretically, the touch of a member of any caste lower than one's own defiles a person of a higher caste. The rigidity of this rule, however, varies from caste to caste and place to place. It used to be prevalent in UP and Gujarat. As per the classification given by Ghurye, the Shannar, a toddy tapper of Tamil Nadu, contaminates a Brahmin if he approaches the latter within 24 paces. In Kerala, a Nayyar would approach a Namboodiri Brahmin but may not touch him. In fact, so much rigidity was attached to pollution that a Brahmin would not even perform his ablution within the precincts of a Sudra's habitation.

IV. **Endogamy:** Caste system also imposed restrictions on marriage. Castes are divided into sub-castes and each sub-caste is an endogamous group. The principle of endogamy was so prominent that Edward Westermarck said, 'it is the essence of caste system'. Every caste or sub-caste insists that members should marry within the group. Any breach of this rule is viewed as a serious offence, the punishment for which often amounts to ostracization from one's own community or caste. However, there are few exceptions to

this rule in the form of hypergamy (marriage of a higher caste man with a lower caste woman). Except in cases of hypergamy, each caste had to adhere strictly to the rules with regard to matrimonial alliances. For instance, the younger son of a Namboodiri Brahmin of Kerala can marry a Nayyar woman.

- V. **Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation:** In a caste based society there are restrictions on choosing one's own vocation. Each caste group is traditionally associated with a caste occupation, which is hereditary. Abandoning one's hereditary occupation was looked down upon so people strictly followed their caste occupation even if it was not lucrative. Thus, a Brahmin would consider it his rightful duty to be a priest while a shoemaker would consider it his duty to prepare shoes. No caste would allow its members to take any calling which was either degrading or impure. There are, however, occupations like trading, agriculture, military service, working in the field etc, which are considered as being open to all.
- VI. **Civil and religious disabilities:** Social segregation is another aspect of caste differentiation. Ghurye remarked, 'segregation of individual castes or of groups of castes in a village is the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities and it has prevailed in a more or less definite form all over India.' In a village or a town, various castes were segregated on the basis of residence. Segregation has been more severe in South than in North India. In the South, as referred to by Ghurye, parts of the town or village are inaccessible to certain castes. The agitation by impure castes to gain free access to streets in Vaikam in Travancore brought into clear relief some of the disabilities of these castes. 'All over India,' Ghurye points out, 'the impure castes are debarred from drawing water from the village well, which is used by members of other castes.' A Mahar, for example, in Maharashtra, was forbidden from spitting on the road lest a pure caste may get polluted if his foot happens to touch it. Besides these, there were restrictions on Shudras from entering temples and attending performance of certain rituals. They were prohibited from reciting vedic *mantras* and performing vedic rituals. They had to satisfy themselves with Puranic rituals. A Brahmin was not expected to bow to anyone while members of other castes were required to bow to him.

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### Check Your Progress

1. Name the sociologists who promoted the structural universalistic view of the Indian caste system.
2. State two characteristics of caste.

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### 3.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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1. The structural universalistic view is promoted by K. Davis, N.K. Bose and A.R. Desai. They are of the view that caste in India manifests the general principle of a closed form of social stratification based on hierarchy.
2. Two characteristics of caste are the following:
  - (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and include all persons so born,
  - (ii) the membership is forbidden by an inexorable social law to men outside the group.

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### 3.4 SUMMARY

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- Caste is an ancient social institution that has been a part of Indian history and culture for centuries. It is an institution uniquely associated with the Indian sub-continent and hence is of indigenous nature.
- Irawati Karve, in her book *Hindu Society: An Interpretation*, says that ‘The Indian caste society is a society made of semi-independent units, each having its own traditional pattern of behaviour.
- On the basis of combination of two dichotomous propositions (structural and cultural), we can get four approaches on the caste system,—structural universalistic, structural pluralistic, cultural universalistic and cultural particularistic.
- According to traditional theory, the caste system was created by the creator, Brahma, himself. According to *Rig Veda*, Brahmins are like the mouth, Kshatriyas are like the arms, Vaishyas are like the stomach, and the Shudras like the feet of the social body.
- According to J.H. Hutton, the caste system originated in the religious customs and rituals of the non-Aryan groups, particularly in the theory of Mana (the mystic power).
- Caste system in India is complex in nature. Scholars such as Ghurye, Hutton and Ketkar have pointed out the characteristics of caste.
- The caste system exhibits a segmental division which shows that the groups are divided into various groups called castes.
- Every caste imposes restrictions on its members with regard to food, drink and social intercourse.

- Caste system also imposed restrictions on marriage. Castes are divided into sub-castes and each sub-caste is an endogamous group.
- In a caste based society there are restrictions on choosing one's own vocation. Each caste group is traditionally associated with a caste occupation, which is hereditary.
- Social segregation is another aspect of caste differentiation. Ghurye remarked, 'segregation of individual castes or of groups of castes in a village is the most obvious mark of civil privileges and disabilities and it has prevailed in a more or less definite form all over India.'

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### 3.5 KEY WORDS

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- **Endogamy:** It is the practice of marrying only within the limits of a local community, clan, or tribe.
- **Hierarchy:** It is a system in which people or things are arranged according to their importance.
- **Commensality:** It is the practice of eating and drinking together at the same table as a group.

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### 3.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Define the term 'caste' in your own words.
2. How have the various Western and Indian scholars defined caste?
3. Briefly mention the structure of the Indian caste system.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the theories on the origin of the Indian caste system.
2. Explain the functions and sanctions imposed by the Indian caste system.

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### 3.7 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 4 CHANGES IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

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### NOTES

#### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Structural and Functional Changes in the Caste System
- 4.3 Mobility in the Caste System
- 4.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 4.5 Summary
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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For centuries, caste dictated almost every aspect of Hindu religious and social life, with each group occupying a distinct place in this complex hierarchy. Rural communities were long arranged on the basis of castes — the upper and lower castes almost always lived in segregated colonies, the water wells were not shared, Brahmins would not accept food or drink from the Shudras, and one could marry only within one's caste. However, with India gaining Independence, along with numerous other factors such as urbanization, industrialization and so forth; changes have taken place in the Indian caste system. This unit will help you understand the changes that have taken place in the Indian caste system as well as the factors responsible for bringing about these changes.

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### 4.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the structural and functions changes in the Indian caste system
- Analyse the changing nature of caste in India
- Explain the factors responsible for the changes in the Indian caste system
- Identify the prominent changes that have taken place in the Indian caste system

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### 4.2 STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHANGES IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

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The word caste has been defined from the Portuguese word *Casta*, which means race, breed or kind. Risley defines caste as 'a collection of families or groups of

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families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and is regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community’.

The caste system in India has been studied from the following three different perspectives:

- **Indological:** The Indologists have viewed caste from the scriptural point of view and believe that the ancient Hindu scriptures have given birth to the concept of caste. They maintain that the varnas have originated from Brahma—the *Virat Purusha* (the Great Man)—and castes are units within the varna system, which have developed as a result of hypergamy and hypogamy. The rituals to be performed by the four varnas are status bound and laid down in the *Brahmanas* (800 BC), while the customs and laws to be followed by each caste are laid down in the *Smritis* (100–200 BC).

The Brahmins were given the pre-eminent position in the society as it was believed that they had the divine right to interpret law and religion. The Indologists believe that the caste system would continue to exist as it was divinely ordained and cannot be dismantled by human beings.

- **Social-anthropological:** The social anthropologists have studied caste from the cultural point of view. The organizational and structural approaches of Hutton consider caste as a unique system found in India alone. The institutional approach of Kroeber and Risley does not view the caste system as relevant only to India. They find it in ancient Egypt, medieval Europe and present Southern United States. The relational approach finds caste situations in Army, Business, Factory, etc. It states that the presence/absence of caste in a society depends upon the absence/presence of mobility in groups. If mobility is normal, there is no caste system and vice versa.
- **Sociological:** Sociologists have viewed caste from the stratificational point of view. They study caste in terms of social stratification in a society. They study it as a phenomenon of social inequality. According to them, society has certain structural aspects and it distributes its members in social positions. The interaction is the basis of social structures and types of interactions along with associated norms categorize social structures.

### Theories of Caste

Though a number of theories explaining the origin of caste in India have been propounded, no one of them has managed to explain it properly. While Herbert Risley, a British ethnographer, explains the origin of caste with reference to racial differences, Abbe Dubois, author of *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, traces the origin of caste to the role played by the Brahmins. Some such theories are as follows:

- **Traditional theory:** Various scholars have described Hindu society as a supernatural-centred society. In it, people are attracted to abstract truths

and try to find its reality through mysticism. There is no effort to analyse these things scientifically. These scholars have observed, and rightly so, that the Hindus try to explain every phenomenon in terms of God and religion. Even the origin of the institution of caste is sought to be explained in terms of religion by relating it to the body of Brahma.

The traditional theory believes that the Indian caste system has been divinely ordained. While the sociological theory views caste system as an artificially created system of stratification in which the role and status of an individual is determined by birth (ascriptive status), the traditional theory views it as a natural system of stratification. The traditional theory has two versions—mythical and metaphysical.

The mythical version treats the four varnas as the four castes and it believes that the four emerged from different parts of Brahma's body. This theory finds the caste system to be a completely normal and natural institution of social functions. It believes that membership of an individual in a caste is determined by the doctrines of karma and dharma. According to the doctrine of karma (actions), a man is born in a particular caste due to his actions in his previous incarnation. Srinivas (1952) summarizes the doctrine of Karma as the birth of a man in a particular caste. It is certainly not an accident. He was born in that caste because he deserved to be born there.

The doctrine of Dharma (religious duty) propounds that a person who accepts the caste system and regulates his life according to the norms of his particular caste, is living by his Dharma. On the other hand, one who questions a norm governing his caste is violating dharma. While the former is rewarded, the latter invites punishment. This reward and punishment would befall both in this life and in the next incarnation. Thus, a person who lives according to his dharma will be born in a high caste in his next life whereas somebody who violates his dharma would be born in a low caste.

The metaphysical version explains the function, hierarchy and other characteristics of caste. Each caste has a separate function, which is determined by the nature and qualities of the members of that caste. The Hindus believe that an individual's nature consists of two sets of qualities—*gotrika* and *namika*. The *gotrika* (lineage) qualities are the hereditary qualities, which an individual inherits from his *gotra* and shares with the members of his family. The *namika* (individual) qualities, on the other hand, are specific individual qualities that one does not share with any other member of his family. Thus, while the *namika* qualities differentiate an individual from others, the *gotrika* qualities identify him with a particular group. The *gotrika* qualities explain the characteristic of hereditary membership of the caste system.

Another characteristic of the caste system is fixed occupation. It is explained by the close connection between nature (*swabhav*) and occupation. The nature of a man determines his occupation and since people of a particular group have the same *gotrika* qualities, they tend to do the same kind of

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occupation. Thus, a particular caste gets limited to a particular occupation. The traditional theory identifies two kinds of functions—ordinary and extraordinary. While ordinary functions require no specialized skills, extraordinary functions do. It further divides extraordinary functions into three types—techno-economic, politico-legal and cultural-religious. The traditional theory accords the highest status to cultural-religious functions. Politico-legal and techno-economic functions are placed after it. The lowest status is accorded to the ordinary functions. The Brahmins get the highest status in caste society because they discharge the cultural-religious functions. Kshatriyas follow them by performing politico-legal functions. Vaishyas are placed at the third place as they are engaged in techno-economic functions. The Shudras are placed at the bottom of the four-fold system because they perform the ordinary functions.

The traditional theory of the origin of caste has been rejected by many scholars because it considers caste as a natural phenomenon and it considers the four varnas as the four castes. If we accept this view, then it would mean that the varna and not the caste is the unit of the caste system. Refuting this view, M. N. Srinivas has stated that the idea of caste as the four-fold division of society is a gross oversimplification of facts. He says that the real unit of the caste system is not the varna but the *jati*, which is a very small endogamous group, practicing a traditional occupation and enjoying cultural and ritual autonomy.

- **Brahmanical theory:** Abbe Dubois feels that the caste system originated and developed in India due to the Brahmins. His view is that the caste system was designed by the Brahmins for the Brahmins. They devised this system to place various restrictions (food, marriage, etc.) on non-Brahmins so that they can protect their purity, which is necessary to perpetuate their monopoly in matters of religious and sacred functions.

G. S. Ghurye also believed in the view professed by Abbe Dubois. He supports the Brahmanical theory. He maintains that the various factors that characterize caste society were the result of the efforts of the Brahmins to exclude the Shudras from religious and social communion with them. He concludes that caste in India is a Brahmanic child of the Indo-Aryan culture of North India and was thereafter transferred to other parts of the country.

- **Racial theory:** Herbert Risley is the main proponent of this theory and finds support from scholars like Ghurye, Majumdar and Westermarck. According to this theory, the clash of cultures and the contact of races crystallized castes in India. This theory believes that the perceived superiority of the Aryans vis-à-vis the aboriginals and the social intercourse between the two groups laid the foundation for the caste system. Marriages between the Aryans and the aboriginals resulted in the birth of half-breeds and they were called the *chandals* who had to be confined to the lowest position in society. Risley has referred to six processes in the formation of castes:

- o **Change in traditional occupation:** Adoption of a new occupation often resulted in the creation of a distinct caste.
- o **Migration:** Migration of a caste group to a new place often resulted in development of a distinct caste.
- o **Change in customs:** Adoption of new customs and practices led to the growth of a new caste.
- o **Preservation of old traditions:** Preservation of traditional customs by a group led to their moving away from those who had adopted new customs and resulted in growth of a new caste.
- o **Hinduization:** Sometimes a tribe enters the fold of Hinduism by adopting Hindu customs and beliefs and this results in the creation of a new caste that is distinct from the other caste Hindus.
- o **Role of religious enthusiasts:** Preaching of his own doctrines by a religious leader often resulted in the formation of a new religious sect, which gradually became a new caste.

Risley's racial theory is supported by other scholars. According to Ghurye, the Aryans tried to show off their superiority because they were fairer in colour in comparison to the natives. Westermarck observes that India was inhabited by the dark people before the Aryans came and took control. The Aryans had bitter contempt for the original inhabitants of India and drew sharp distinctions between themselves and the latter. These distinctions gave rise to the caste system.

Acceptance of Risley's racial theory would give rise to the question as to why then the caste system should be confined to India. Risley himself believes that the caste system exists in other countries too. The discrimination on the basis of skin colour in countries like South Africa, South America, Canada, etc. has been put forward as a kind of caste discrimination.

- **Occupational theory:** Nesfield is the proponent of this theory and is ably supported by Ibbetson. This theory holds that caste has nothing to do with race or religion and its origin is due to occupations. Nesfield maintains that occupations were passed on hereditarily across generations and practising the same occupation resulted in the creation of occupational guilds. These guilds gradually came to be known as castes. The hierarchy in the caste system was due to the feeling of superiority or inferiority of occupations. Answering a question as to how the Brahmins got the highest status in this hierarchy, Nesfield explained that Brahmins had specialization in the occupation of sacrifices, hymns and rituals, which were of the greatest importance for the people of the society. Thus, the Brahmins acquired the highest position in the caste system.

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Ibbetson, supporting Nesfield, says that tribes developed as occupational guilds and came to function on religious lines. Eventually, these tribes developed as castes in the process of social evolution.

Many scholars have criticized the occupational theory of Nesfield and Ibbetson. D. N. Majumdar has rejected the idea of hierarchy of castes in terms of the superiority or inferiority of occupations. He maintains that the status of castes does not depend upon the occupation but upon the degree of purity of blood and the extent of isolation maintained by the groups. Hutton too believes that the occupational theory does not explain the social status of various agricultural castes. The same agricultural caste has a higher status in North India than in South India. The occupational theory fails to explain this.

### Characteristics of the Indian Caste System

According to Dr G. S. Ghurye, any attempt to define caste 'is bound to fail because of the complexity of the phenomenon.' He has outlined the following characteristics of the Indian caste society:

- Segmental division of society
- Hierarchy of castes
- Restrictions on commensality and social intercourse
- Differential civil and religious privileges and disabilities
- Restrictions on occupational choice
- Restrictions on marriage

### Changing Nature of Caste

Caste has never been static. The caste system has been changing continuously and has always undergone adaptive changes. Though the pace of change might have been slow earlier, in the post-independence period the changes have occurred rapidly. The changes can be mainly categorized as follows:

- **Structural changes:** The following are some of the major structural changes in the caste system:
  - o **Decline in the supremacy of the Brahmins:** Due to the forces of modernization and rapid economic development, Brahmins have lost their dominance of yore.
  - o **Dilution of caste hierarchy:** Factors like migration to urban areas, diversification of jobs, etc. have reduced the gaps between different castes and there is greater intercourse amongst members of various castes.
  - o **Socio-economic empowerment of Dalits and Harijans:** The Government's policy of affirmative action in case of the oppressed castes has led to an upwards movement of their social status.

- **Functional changes:** The functional changes in the caste system are as follows:
  - **Birth no longer the sole determinant of status:** Unlike earlier, birth is no longer the sole factor determining social status. Wealth, education, occupation, etc. have become the determinants of status and caste as an ascriber of status has been relegated to the background.
  - **Change due to occupational diversity:** Occupation is no longer hereditarily determined. The so-called high status occupations are accessible to members of all castes. On the other hand, members of high castes have also taken to manual work to earn a decent and dignified living.
  - **Dilution of restrictions on marriage:** The Special Marriages Act, 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have removed the restrictions on inter-caste marriages by legalizing them. Caste endogamy is no more the basis of choosing a mate.
  - **Change in commensality:** Restrictions on food intake by members of various castes have been virtually removed.
  - **Lifestyle changes:** Due to westernization and modernization, the sharp differences in lifestyle of various caste members have come down. A common lifestyle is emerging, which breaks the caste barriers.
  - **Educational restrictions removed:** Education is no more the preserve of the high caste people. Government policies have resulted in providing access to education to all citizens. The amendment of the Constitution to make the right to education a fundamental right is going to improve the situation further.
  - **Changes in political system:** Democracy and universal adult franchise have ensured that every citizen of this country exercises political power through the ballot. Reservation of seats for members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to contest elections has also empowered them politically.
- **Attitudinal changes:** The attitudinal changes in the caste system are as follows:
  - **Decline of the concept of ascriptive status:** The processes of modernization, westernization, industrialization, etc. have seriously eroded the hold of the caste system. People do not accept the notion of ascriptive status any more as it is determined only by birth. Status is now achieved through ability, efficiency, wealth, political power, etc.
  - **Philosophical basis of caste system has become unacceptable:** The belief of people that caste system is divinely

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ordained has undergone change. They have no faith on the philosophical basis of the caste system because they have stopped accepting the doctrine of karma.

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### Factors Responsible for the Changes in the Caste System

The main factors responsible for the changes in the caste system are enumerated as follows:

- **Industrialization:** The process of industrialization has affected the caste structure to a remarkable extent. Caste system functions well in an agrarian economy because in such an economy there is interdependence among the various castes for economic reasons. For example, the cultivator has to avail the services of the carpenter and the weaver and the latter are dependent on the cultivator for food grains. Thus, the village economy functions as a self-sufficient unit.

The growth of industrial economy has weakened this bond of interdependence among the castes. Industrialization has provided new sources of livelihood to people and made occupational mobility possible. Due to this mobility, different castes come together to work at one place. For example, in a factory a Brahmin works alongside a Shudra and cannot avoid the latter's touch or shadow.

- **Urbanization:** Industrialization has resulted in the process of urbanization. New townships have emerged around factories and the rural people migrate to these townships to avail better employment opportunities. Development of modern towns and cities has eroded the hold of caste taboos and restrictions by forcing people to intermingle in their daily lives. Eating out in restaurants where the caste of the cook or the person sitting on the next table is not known, killed all notions of purity and pollution.
- **Modern means of transport and communication:** Modern means of transportation have increased mobility of the people and thereby put an end to the geographical isolation, which was a favourable condition for the creation and continuation of the caste system in India. Moreover, while travelling in the modern modes of transport like buses, trains and airplanes, it is impossible to observe caste rules regarding food, drink and social intercourse.
- **Growth of materialism:** The caste system gets its strength from divine and religious sanctions. People believe in the doctrine of karma and the theory of reincarnation, which make them obey caste rules. But the modern age is dominated by scientific and technological knowledge and this has changed the consciousness of human beings to a great extent. Traditional beliefs, faiths and philosophies are no more the powerful moulders of human behaviour. Material considerations like wealth, power and prestige are given importance. A Shudra having wealth and political power would have a higher status today than a poor Brahmin who follows all the traditional customs

rigidly. Such a change from spiritualism to materialism has gone against the caste system.

- **Modern education:** Modern liberal education introduced by the British has played a crucial role in undermining the importance of caste in Indian society. Modern education is accessible to all irrespective of one's caste or community. It popularized the idea of freedom of association, equality before law, equal rights of all citizens and equal freedom to follow any vocation. It also acts as a powerful force towards the removal of untouchability.
- **New legal system:** The new legal system established by the British has also played a vital role in weakening the influence of caste in India. This system has firmly established the concept of equality before law in India and has given a blow to the age-old legal discrimination against the lower castes, which is a main characteristic of a caste society. Further, with the establishment of modern judicial courts, the caste panchayats have lost their power and effectiveness. Besides, modern legislations like the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955 and Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have proved to be disastrous for the caste system.
- **Social and religious reform movements:** Several religious and social reform movements also played their role. The Bhakti Movement and the Sufi Movement laid emphasis on oneness of mankind and exposed the idea of inequality as man made rather than being divinely ordained. Though they could not eliminate the caste system, they definitely facilitated relaxation of caste rigidities.

Several social reform movements like the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj movements made direct attacks on the caste system, especially targeting its ritual aspect of purity and pollution.

- **Influence of Indian Constitution:** Last but not the least, the influence of the Indian Constitution in weakening the caste system has been universally recognized. Our Constitution confers fundamental rights to all our citizens irrespective of their caste, creed or colour. Article 15(2) of the Constitution directly attacks the caste system by declaring all citizens as equal.

#### Check Your Progress

1. What are the three perspectives of studying the caste system in India?
2. Name the major theories of caste in India.

### 4.3 MOBILITY IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

Indian caste society has undergone tremendous transformation in modern days, and is still undergoing adaptive changes. M.N. Srinivas quite aptly referred to the changes brought about in independent India. In independent India, the provision of Constitutional safeguards to the backward sections of the population, especially

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the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, has given a new lease of life to caste. Many factors have been responsible for the transformation in caste system.

M.N. Srinivas draws out a distinction between traditional and modern caste which roughly coincides with the distinction between pre-British and Post-British period. It was indeed a matter of great significance to learn about the nature of rendering political power to Indians by the British. This was an important step in caste assuming political functions. There were territorial boundaries in the pre-British period which separated the castes by limiting their mobility. But later on the interdependence of castes upon each other for economic and other functions somehow became instrumental in liberating caste from territorial filiations.

Srinivas also refers to the building of roads all over India, the introduction of postage, telegraph, cheap paper and printing - especially in regional languages - enabled castes to organize as they had never done before.

Ghurye has also reflected upon the impact of British rule on the Indian Caste system. The civil and penal codes introduced by the British over the subcontinent took away much of the power previously exercised by Caste Panchayats. However, the process of Sanskritization has also been instrumental in bringing about social mobility leading to fluidity in the caste structure.

Other factors like Western education, urbanization, industrialization and the new legal system further contributed in bringing about changes in the caste system. The expansion of industries and service sectors have led to expansion of occupational opportunities to many castes. So in spite of the ascribed status assigned to castes, people focussed on achieved status. Such occupational spaces have led to the abandonment of the principles of pollution and purity. Moreover, democratic decentralization of power right upto grassroots level has led to increased participation in the political process and besides economic success, access to political power has become another means of status enhancement.

Some of the prominent changes identified in the caste system are as follows:

1. There has been a decline in the supremacy of Brahmins. The Brahmins who used to occupy topmost position in the stratification system of India are no longer considered so. Modern occupation and urbanization has led to increased occupational mobility among other castes which has enhanced the status of castes lower than the Brahmins in the hierarchy. In the present day context the Weberian notion of one's class position gains ascendancy over one's caste position.
2. The jajmani system has also weakened. The economic context of inter-caste relations which is termed as jajmani system has lost its significance. The monetization of economy and expansion of market system in rural areas has had a severe impact on the economic functions of castes.
3. The second important change is the position of castes due to processes like Sanskritization. Initially, it was observed that caste system had a rigid structure that strictly prohibited social mobility. But with occupational interdependence and opening of greater avenues for employment, the lower castes had an opportunity to pursue an occupation according to

their choice. This led to fluidity in the caste structure and considerable positional changes were observed.

4. The Protective Discrimination Policy of the Government further led to the enhancement of status of many of the subjugated castes. Such policies also led to the improvement in socio-economic conditions of various castes.
5. The enforcement of the Special Marriage Act of 1954 further brought about many changes in improving the marital alliances among the castes. Initially endogamy was strictly observed as an attribute of caste and people violating it were ostracized from the village. But the Special Marriage Act legalized inter-caste marriages which is a significant change in the entire system.
6. The notion of pollution and purity and restrictions on feeding and intercourse are no longer valid. The enactment of Untouchability Offences Act 1956 was an important milestone in this direction. Untouchability was considered a punishable offence and a person found practising it is severely punished either in terms of being fined or sentenced to imprisonment.
7. With industrialization, new occupational structures have developed in urban areas. These new occupations are caste free occupations. Recruitments to these occupations are solely based upon technical skills which can be acquired through modern education only. Thus the traditional concept of caste occupation has lost its significance.
8. Contemporary society is undergoing massive transformation due to technological breakthrough and is witnessing many cultural changes. A new class of lower caste urban youth whom some scholars have termed the 'breakthrough generation' are playing a significant role in bringing about a sea-change by breaking the boundaries that had kept the Sudras in conditions of extreme poverty. This new generation of educated Sudras are positioning themselves for modern urban jobs.

Thus, the caste system has undergone many changes in the recent years. It is however difficult to predict the complete disappearance of such a system. It can be said that though there has been enough fluidity in the system due to many forces, the system still persists in India. The practice of politics through caste, the entire reservation issue and the recent debate about calculation of caste census has further stirred caste sentiments.

### **Check Your Progress**

3. Name the various factors which contributed in bringing about changes in the Indian caste system.
4. When was the Untouchability Offences Act enacted in India and what was its main provision?

## **NOTES**

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## 4.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

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### NOTES

1. The three perspectives of studying the caste system in India are indological, socio-anthropological and sociological perspectives.
2. The major theories of caste in India are traditional theory, Brahmanical theory, racial theory and occupational theory.
3. Factors such as Western education, urbanization, industrialization and the new legal system contributed in bringing about changes in the Indian caste system.
4. The Untouchability Offences Act was enacted in India in 1956. Untouchability was considered a punishable offence and a person found practising it is severely punished either in terms of being fined or sentenced to imprisonment.

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## 4.5 SUMMARY

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- Risley defines caste as ‘a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, professing to follow the same hereditary calling and is regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogenous community’.
- The social anthropologists have studied caste from the cultural point of view. The organizational and structural approaches of Hutton consider caste as a unique system found in India alone.
- Sociologists have viewed caste from the stratificational point of view. They study caste in terms of social stratification in a society. They study it as a phenomenon of social inequality.
- While Herbert Risley, a British ethnographer, explains the origin of caste with reference to racial differences, Abbe Dubois, author of *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, traces the origin of caste to the role played by the Brahmins.
- Various scholars have described Hindu society as a supernatural-centred society. In it, people are attracted to abstract truths and try to find its reality through mysticism.
- The metaphysical version explains the function, hierarchy and other characteristics of caste.
- Another characteristic of the caste system is fixed occupation. It is explained by the close connection between nature (*swabhav*) and occupation.

- Abbe Dubois feels that that the caste system originated and developed in India due to the Brahmins. His view is that the caste system was designed by the Brahmins for the Brahmins.
- Herbert Risley is the main proponent of this theory and finds support from scholars like Ghurye, Majumdar and Westermarck. According to this theory, the clash of cultures and the contact of races crystallized castes in India.
- Many scholars have criticized the occupational theory of Nesfield and Ibbetson. D. N. Majumdar has rejected the idea of hierarchy of castes in terms of the superiority or inferiority of occupations.
- Caste has never been static. The caste system has been changing continuously and has always undergone adaptive changes. Though the pace of change might have been slow earlier, in the post-independence period the changes have occurred rapidly.
- Industrialization has resulted in the process of urbanization. New townships have emerged around factories and the rural people migrate to these townships to avail better employment opportunities.
- The caste system gets its strength from divine and religious sanctions. People believe in the doctrine of karma and the theory of reincarnation, which make them obey caste rules.
- Indian caste society has undergone tremendous transformation in modern days, and is still undergoing adaptive changes. M.N. Srinivas quite aptly referred to the changes brought about in independent India.
- Other factors like Western education, urbanization, industrialization and the new legal system further contributed in bringing about changes in the caste system. The expansion of industries and service sectors have led to expansion of occupational opportunities to many castes.
- Contemporary society is undergoing massive transformation due to technological breakthrough and is witnessing many cultural changes.

## NOTES

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### 4.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Mysticism:** It is popularly known as becoming one with God or the Absolute, but may refer to any kind of ecstasy or altered state of consciousness which is given a religious or spiritual meaning.
- **Urbanization:** It refers to the migration of population from rural to urban areas.
- **Materialism:** It is the belief that considers material possessions and physical comfort as more important than spiritual values.

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## 4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### NOTES

#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Briefly mention the view of sociologists about the Indian caste system.
2. Write a short note on the racial theory about the origin of the Indian caste system.
3. What are the criticisms raised against the occupational theory of the Indian caste system?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Critically analyse the changing nature of the Indian caste system.
2. Examine the factors responsible for bringing about changes in the Indian caste system.
3. Discuss the prominent changes which have taken place in the Indian caste system.

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## 4.8 FURTHER READINGS

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# UNIT 5 PROBLEMS OF WEAKER AND MARGINALIZED SECTIONS IN INDIA

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*Problems of Weaker and Marginalized Sections in India*

## NOTES

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Problems Faced by Dalits
- 5.3 Minorities and their Problems
- 5.4 Problems Faced by Tribals
- 5.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 5.6 Summary
- 5.7 Key Words
- 5.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.9 Further Readings

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## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit discusses the condition of Dalits, minorities and tribes in India. The Dalits are generally regarded as untouchables. The minorities, on the other hand, refer to people that constitute a low percentage of people in a nation and tribes refer to people linked with social, economic or generally regional ties. According to social stature these different classes are classified on the basis of their work, count and habitat. Where the Dalits are considered involved in leatherwork, butchering, or removal of rubbish, animal carcasses, and waste; the minorities are considered deprived of privileges that the larger communities get to avail. Similarly, tribes are considered as people descended from a particular community or region, and are often considered backwards. In this unit, you will study about the problems faced by the weaker and marginalized sections of the Indian society.

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## 5.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Examine the problems faced by Dalits in India
- Define the term ‘minorities’
- Discuss the problems faced by tribals in India

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## 5.2 PROBLEMS FACED BY DALITS

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Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over



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India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions. There are many different names proposed for defining this group of people, including *Panchamas* ('fifth varna'), and *Asprushya* ('untouchables'). The word 'Dalit' may be derived from Sanskrit, and means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed', or 'broken to pieces'. It was perhaps first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile 'untouchable' castes of the twice-born Hindus.

According to Victor Premasagar, the term expresses their 'weakness, poverty and humiliation at the hands of the upper castes in the Indian society.'

The contemporary use of Dalit is centered on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity.

Mohandas Gandhi adopted the word Harijan, translated roughly as 'Children of God', to identify the former untouchables. But this term is now considered derogatory when used to describe Dalits. In addition, the terms 'Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes' (SC/ST) are the official terms used in Indian Government documents to identify former 'untouchables' and tribes. However, in 2008 the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, noticing that 'Dalit' was used interchangeably with the official term 'scheduled castes', called the term 'unconstitutional' and asked state governments to end its use. After the order, the Chhattisgarh government ended the official use of the word 'Dalit'.

The varna system which existed during the vedic period, in course of time degenerated into the caste system. Since then, the Scheduled Castes/Dalits also known as 'untouchables' have been suffering from various social, legal, economic, educational, and other disabilities. For centuries they were denied political representation, legal rights, civic facilities, educational privileges and economic opportunities. Even today the Scheduled Castes are not free from problems.

### **The social restrictions and inabilities of the Scheduled Castes**

The Scheduled Castes or the Harijans suffered for centuries from a number of social disabilities among which the following may be noted:

- **Lowest status in history:** They are considered to be unholy, inferior, and low and are looked down upon by the other castes. They have been stigma of untouchability. They have been treated as the servants of the other caste people. They were kept at a distance from other caste people.
- **Education disabilities:** The Harijans were forbidden from taking up to education during the early days. Sanskrit education was denied from them. Even today majority of them are illiterate and ignorant.
- **Civic disability:** For a long time untouchables castes were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities such as- villages wells, ponds, temples, hotels, schools, hospitals, etc. They were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. Even today they are

segregated from other spatially. Some lower caste people were not allowed carry umbrellas, to wear shoes or golden ornaments and to milk cows.

- **Religious disabilities:** The Dalits also suffers from religious disabilities even today. They are not allowed to enter temples in many places. The Brahmins, who offer their priestly services to some lower castes, are not prepared to officiate in the ceremonies of the ‘untouchable’ castes.
- **Economic disabilities:** Due to social and religious disabilities, people of scheduled caste have to face many type of economic disabilities. They have to face many problems in life due to these economic disabilities. The propertied people are comparatively less in them. Majority of them depend on agriculture but only few of them own land. For Harijan the selection of occupation is limited. They are not allowed to do work allotted to the upper castes. Majority of them are landless labourers. More than 90.1 of the agricultural labourers in India belong to the depressed classes.
- **Political disabilities:** The untouchables hardly participate in the political matters. They were not allowed to take part in political and administrative functions of the state. Under the British rule, they were given the right to vote for the first time. After independence equal political opportunities and rights have been provided for Harijans also. Politically, the Harijans are yet to become an organized force.

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### 5.3 MINORITIES AND THEIR PROBLEMS

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Minorities in a community refer to a sect of people who are lesser in number in comparison to the total population of the country, with the different religions in it. The Indian society has a long history of external aggression. But it is adequately adept in accommodating and assimilating the alien cultures in spite of resentment to the outside forces. In a plural society like India, such co-operative activities sometimes have been reasons for insecurity. The period of the Mughal dynasty that preceded colonial rule was a turbulent period witnessing numerous wars and upheavals. Moreover, the divide and rule policy of the British sowed the seeds of communalism in India.

The most drastic effects of communalism was felt by the minorities. Minorities in India, being in lesser number face these atrocities and indifferent ideology.

Communalism can be conceptualized as an ideology which is based on blind loyalty towards one’s own religion, and at the same time, antagonism against the other religions. Such an ideology divides the society into religious groups who have differing—and sometimes conflicting—interests. Communal people practice politics through religion.

The term ‘communalism’ came to be first used by the British in the context of colonies like India where substantial religious minorities existed alongside a religious majority. This specific connotation had a certain element of divisiveness

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and bigotry and the term—with its negative specifications—continued much after the Partition and Post-Independence era. The issue of communalism was debated during the Minto-Morley and Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. It was at this debate that the delegates referred to the existence of ‘communal feelings’ and ‘communal principles’ in India, and issues pertaining to the representation of the various religious groups were talked about.

Communalism has been a problem in India for quite some time. As the national liberation movement drew near its goal, communalism spawned the pernicious ‘two-nation’ theory. It ultimately led to the Partition of India. The upsurge of communalism based on the mandir-masjid issue distorted the feelings of nationalism among the Indian masses, thereby undermining the spirit of harmony.

Problems other than communalism faced by minorities are that of participating in the economic, political, and social mainstream of Indian life. The Sachar Committee report instituted by the government of India highlighted the poor socio-economic conditions of Muslims in India. The report was the first of its kind to reveal the backwardness of the minority community. It brought the issue of Muslim Indian inequality to national attention, sparking a discussion that is still ongoing. Muslims in India have lagged behind the national averages in most aspects of human development, including education, employment, economic prosperity and land holding.

### Check Your Progress

1. When was the word ‘Dalit’ first used and by whom?
2. What was the word adopted by Mahatma Gandhi to denote the former untouchables?
3. What do minorities in a community refer to?

## 5.4 PROBLEMS FACED BY TRIBALS

There are different sources from which the term ‘tribe’ is believed to have originated. This term was used by the Portuguese to designate the colonized people in Africa. The term’s origin might be found known the Latin word ‘tres’. The dative and ablative case forms of this word are both *tribus*. The word ‘tribus’ could therefore mean ‘from the three’ or ‘for the three’.

The English word ‘tribe’ occurs in 12th-century Middle English literature; where it refers to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The word is from Old French ‘tribu’, which is in turn from Latin word ‘tribus’. In Latin, the term ‘tribus’ refers to the threefold ethnic divisions of the ancient people of Rome: Ramnes (Ramnenses), Tities (Titienses), and Luceres; corresponding, to the Latins, Sabines and Etruscans respectively. The Ramnes were named after Romulus, the leader of the Latins Tities after Tati; the leader of the Sabines; and Luceres after Lucumo, the leader of an Etruscan army that had assisted the Latins.

Some definitions of the term 'tribe', drawing on the study of different scholars, have been given below.

### **According to Lewis Gillin and Philip Gillin**

'The tribe is one such group of local communities which lives in common area, speaks a common dialect and follows a common culture.'

Budhadeb Chaudhuri in the introduction to a set of five volumes entitled *Tribal Transformation in India* provides the following definition of a tribe:

'Anthropologically, a tribe is a social group, the members of which lives in a common territory, have a common dialect, uniform social organization and possess cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organization and religious pattern.'

As per Paul Hockings:

'... a tribe is a system of social organization which embraces a number of local groups or settlements, which occupies a territory, and normally carries its own distinctive culture, its own name, and its own language.'

According to John Milton Yinger, a tribe:

'... is small, usually preliterate and pre-industrial, relatively isolated, endogamous (with exogamous sub-tribal divisions), united mainly by kinship and culture, and in many places also territorial boundaries, and strongly ethnocentric ('We are the people').'

In the words of D.N. Majumdar:

'A tribe is a collection of families, bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation.'

According to George Peter Murdock, tribe:

'... is a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, villages or other/ subgroups which usually have a definite geographical area, a separate language/a singular and distinct culture and either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against strangers.'

It is evident from these definitions that a tribal community possesses some specific characteristics that may or may not be found in some other specific community.

### **Land Alienation of the Indian Tribes**

Land alienation means grabbing tribal population land by non-tribal population. According to the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India (in its 2007–2008 Annual Report), "The State governments have accepted the policy of prohibiting the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals and for restoration of

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alienated tribal lands to them. The States with large tribal population have since enacted laws for this purpose.’

It is further stated in the 2007–2008 Annual Report that, ‘Reports received from various States, indicate that 5.06 lakh cases of tribal land alienation have been registered, covering 9.02 lakh acres of land, of which 2.25 lakh cases have been disposed off in favour of tribals covering a total area of 5.00 lakh acres. 1.99 lakh cases covering an area of 4.11 lakh acres have been rejected by the Courts on various grounds’.

However, in Madhya Pradesh, there is not a single case out of the total of 29,596 cases on tribal land’s alienation and restoration that has been decided in tribal’s favour. But in Orissa, out of 104,644 cases 43,213 cases were decided against the tribals. In Tripura out of 29,112 cases, 20,043 were rejected.

### **Problem of indebtedness in Indian tribes**

Indebtedness among the tribals is another serious socio-economic problem. It has been, and still is, probably the most difficult problem facing almost the entire tribal population of India. There is no doubt that indebtedness is one of the worst forms of exploitation to which the tribal people are exposed through traditional moneylending. According to a survey, indebtedness among the tribals was 34.42 per cent in the year 2000-01. Average loan on each family was ‘ 2000-3000 in the year 2000-2001. Quoting a source Jagannath Rath (2010) informs us that about 85 per cent of tribal families are affected by indebtedness. Out of it, approximately 72 per cent of the tribals are indebted to private moneylenders and remaining to shopkeepers, friends and other sources.

Indebtedness is not so serious a problem in tribal states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram etc. This is because these regions of the Northeast were closed to the middlemen and contractors during British rule. Otherwise, indebtedness is quite widespread and an all-India phenomenon. In central India and other parts of the country including Rajasthan, states in South India, Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, etc., the problem is the root cause leading to other economic problems.

Normally, the people depending either partially or fully on foraging of natural resources did not need any borrowing at the time of food shortage. They were living in self-sufficient economic conditions as the forest wealth was at their disposal to sustain themselves during the shortage. Moreover, the clan solidarity used to come to the rescue of a family on reciprocity at the time of need. But when clan solidarity declined, and an alternative in the form of borrowing was easily accessible, then people started borrowing. It is to be mentioned that the origin of the problem was mainly due to the introduction of money economy in the tribal areas. Earlier tribal economy was mostly based on barter system. During British period, the Government demanded revenue in cash. Non-tribal moneylenders came forward to lend cash to tribals to meet revenue requirements. The agricultural tribal people borrow both in cash and in kind. They usually borrow seeds before sowing/

preparing nursery bed and grains during lean season. This practice is recorded in Maharashtra, Odisha and Tripura.

Some of the causes of indebtedness have been outlined below.

- Land alienation and loss of tribal rights over land and forests.
- Illiteracy and ignorance which lead to weak bargaining power for their agricultural and forest products in the market.
- Increase in population and decline in traditional resource base as a source of livelihood leading to poverty.
- Traditional method of subsistent resource use like cultivation, but spending to satisfy acquired non-traditional habits through market.
- Lack of loan from banks for unproductive purposes which tribals are accustomed to.
- Expensive customs and extravagancy at the time of marriages, deaths, fairs and festivals.
- Easy availability of loan in the house of the moneylenders and subsequent manipulation and exploitation by moneylenders.
- Increasing health problem, no immunity to new diseases in traditional curative system.
- Adherence to village council decisions regarding fines and fear of excommunication.

Indebtedness leads to social and economic maladies. Empirical studies testimony that the system of bonded labour in the locality, and mostly with the moneylenders, is the outcome of indebtedness. It causes poverty, subsequent migration and the status of bondage beyond the locality of the tribal borrowers. It also leads to land alienation due to mortgage where this system has emerged. The most important consequence is the exploitation and oppression of the debtor and his family. The exploitation may continue from generation to generation. The Koltas of Jaunsar-Bawar are the classical example of the worst sufferers of indebtedness and these unfortunate people are carrying the burden from generation to generation. Some of other important consequences, direct and indirect, are as follows:

- Loss of freedom and human dignity the consequent utilization of their labour power by the creditor
- Existence of the system of child bonded labour
- Migration
- Psychological frustrations
- Crime
- Prostitution
- Physical and mental exploitation
- Alienation of land and its acquisition by the creditor

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Article 46 of the Constitution of India clearly lays down the responsibility on the State to protect the Scheduled Tribes from Social Injustice and all forms of exploitation. But the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution empowers the Governor of a state to regulate the business moneylenders in Scheduled areas. In pursuance of this provision, various state governments have promulgated and enacted various Laws and Acts. Some of these laws to control moneylending, debt redemption and abolition of debt bondage in different states are as follows:

1. The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Moneylenders Regulation, 1963
2. The Agency Debt Bondage Abolition, 1964
3. The Assam Moneylenders Regulation, 1968
4. The Bihar Moneylenders (Regulation of Transaction) Act, 1939
5. The Bombay Agricultural Debtors Relief At, 1947
6. The Kerala Moneylending Act, 1958
7. The M.P. Anusuchit Jan Jati Rini Sahayata Act, 1966
8. The Madras Indebted Agriculturists (Repayment of Debt) Act, 1955
9. The Mysore Pawn Brokers Act, 1961
10. The Orissa Moneylenders (Application of Certain Provisions) Regulation, 1950
11. The Rajasthan *Sagri* System Abolition Act, 1961

With the enactment of several anti-moneylending Acts and their implementation in tribal areas, moneylending activities by private moneylenders have been checked to some extent. Cooperative institutions, Regional Rural Banks and SHG groups have started providing loans in tribal areas. The tribals have not yet mentally tuned up to take loans from these financial institutions. The moneylenders often manipulate the laws to their advantage. Despite the existence of legal and protective measures to curb moneylending in scheduled areas and provisions for debt-relief, enforcement has been weak and ineffective. The non-recognition of the consumption needs of tribals and the non-availability of institutional consumption credit makes the tribal people fall easy victim to moneylenders. This leads to dependence of the tribal on moneylenders, and the enormous rates of interest keep the tribal in perpetual debt, resulting in the mortgage and ultimate loss of his/her land and property. Positive measures to improve the flow of institutional credit for consumption through self help groups are being undertaken nowadays. For instance, the Andhra Pradesh model for food security and consumption credit would be worth emulating in other states. So education and awareness will come a big way to help the tribals and free them from the clutches of moneylenders.

### **Problem of Health and Nutrition in Indian Tribes**

In India, there are many tribal people who suffer from chronic infections and diseases. The water borne diseases are more life threatening. The Indian tribals

also suffer from deficiency diseases. The tribes in Himalayan region suffer from goitre because of iodine deficiency. They may also suffer from leprosy and tuberculosis. The rate of infant mortality is also very high among some of the tribes. Malnutrition which is very common amongst various tribes has also affected the tribal children general health because the ability to resist infection is lowered by it. Malnutrition leads to chronic illness and sometimes to brain impairment.

In many areas of India, the tribes face lack of personal hygiene, poor sanitation conditions, and poor mother-child health services. No health education is provided, and national preventive programmes are also not there. Because of lack of health services the health of the tribals is poor. There are problems like 'insanitary food supplies, water contamination, and inadequate food in-take' and these reflect on the tribals health status. Malaria, the tropical disease, is still widespread in the various tribal areas.

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### Check Your Progress

4. State one major problem that exists among the tribal population in India.
5. Mention the various Indian laws enacted to control moneylending, debt redemption and abolition of debt bondage in different states.

## 5.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The word 'Dalit' was perhaps first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile 'untouchable' castes of the twice-born Hindus.
2. Mahatma Gandhi adopted the word Harijan, translated roughly as 'Children of God', to identify the former untouchables. But this term is now considered derogatory when used to describe Dalits.
3. Minorities in a community refer to a sect of people who are lesser in number in comparison to the total population of the country, with the different religions in it.
4. Indebtedness is a serious socio-economic problem that exists among the tribal population in India.
5. The various Indian laws enacted to control moneylending, debt redemption and abolition of debt bondage in different states are the following:
  - (i) The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Moneylenders Regulation, 1963
  - (ii) The Agency Debt Bondage Abolition, 1964
  - (iii) The Assam Moneylenders Regulation, 1968
  - (iv) The Bihar Moneylenders (Regulation of Transaction) Act, 1939
  - (v) The Bombay Agricultural Debtors Relief At, 1947
  - (vi) The Kerala Moneylending Act, 1958



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## 5.6 SUMMARY

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- Dalit is a designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable. Dalits are a mixed population, consisting of numerous social groups from all over India; they speak a variety of languages and practice a multitude of religions.
- It was perhaps first used by Jyotirao Phule in the nineteenth century, in the context of the oppression faced by the erstwhile ‘untouchable’ castes of the twice-born Hindus.
- The contemporary use of Dalit is centered on the idea that as a people they may have been broken by oppression but they survive and even thrive by finding meaning in the struggle of their existence towards human dignity.
- Mohandas Gandhi adopted the word Harijan, translated roughly as ‘Children of God’, to identify the former untouchables. But this term is now considered derogatory when used to describe Dalits.
- For centuries they were denied political representation, legal rights, civic facilities, educational privileges and economic opportunities. Even today the Scheduled Castes are not free from problems.
- The untouchables hardly participate in the political matters. They were not allowed to take part in political and administrative functions of the state.
- Minorities in a community refer to a sect of people who are lesser in number in comparison to the total population of the country, with the different religions in it. The Indian society has a long history of external aggression.
- The most drastic effects of communalism was felt by the minorities. Minorities in India, being in lesser number face these atrocities and indifferent ideology.
- Communalism can be conceptualized as an ideology which is based on blind loyalty towards one’s own religion, and at the same time, antagonism against the other religions. Such an ideology divides the society into religious groups who have differing—and sometimes conflicting—interests.
- Communalism has been a problem in India for quite some time. As the national liberation movement drew near its goal, communalism spawned the pernicious ‘two-nation’ theory.
- There are different sources from which the term ‘tribe’ is believed to have originated. This term was used by the Portuguese to designate the colonized people in Africa.
- Land alienation means grabbing tribal population land by non-tribal population. According to the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India (in its 2007–2008 Annual Report), “The State governments have accepted the policy of prohibiting the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals and for restoration of alienated tribal lands to them.

- Indebtedness among the tribals is another serious socio-economic problem. It has been, and still is, probably the most difficult problem facing almost the entire tribal population of India.
- Indebtedness is not so serious a problem in tribal states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram etc. This is because these regions of the Northeast were closed to the middlemen and contractors during British rule.
- Article 46 of the Constitution of India clearly lays down the responsibility on the State to protect the Scheduled Tribes from Social Injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Positive measures to improve the flow of institutional credit for consumption through self-help groups are being undertaken nowadays.
- In India, there are many tribal people who suffer from chronic infections and diseases. The water borne diseases are more life threatening. The Indian tribals also suffer from deficiency diseases.
- In many areas of India, the tribes face lack of personal hygiene, poor sanitation conditions, and poor mother-child health services.

## NOTES

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### 5.7 KEY WORDS

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- **Varna system:** In Hindu society, the varna system divided the society into four varnas—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishya and Shudras.
- **Land alienation:** It is that which has been acquired from customary landowners by the government, either for its own use or for private development requiring mortgage or other forms of guarantees.
- **Bonded labour:** It is an oppressive form of forced labour where the labourer forfeits certain basic rights and freedom.

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### 5.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. What does the contemporary use of the word 'Dalit' denote?
2. Briefly mention the social restrictions faced by the Scheduled Castes in India.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the major problems faced by minorities in India.
2. Examine the problems faced by tribals in India.
3. 'Communalism has been a problem in India for quite some time.' Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

**NOTES**

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## **5.9 FURTHER READINGS**

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**BLOCK - II****KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY, GENDER ROLES**

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**NOTES**

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**UNIT 6 KINSHIP**

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**Structure**

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Definition, Degree, Lineage and Patterns of Kinship
- 6.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 6.4 Summary
- 6.5 Key Words
- 6.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 6.7 Further Readings

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**6.0 INTRODUCTION**

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The term 'kinship' is often used as shorthand for 'kinship and marriage'. It is normal to distinguish between consanguinity (relationship by blood) from affinity (relationship by marriage). Hence, parents and children are consanguineous kins; whereas, husband and wife are affines. Marriage is the foundation of family, and the family is the foundation of social life. The ties of family and marriage give rise to kinship. In this unit, you will study about the types, degrees, lineage, usages and patterns of kinship.

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**6.1 OBJECTIVES**

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

- Define the term kinship
- Discuss the types of kinship
- Examine patterns and usages of kinship

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**6.2 DEFINITION, DEGREE, LINEAGE AND PATTERNS OF KINSHIP**

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In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother 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,

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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. This fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to kinship system.

Because 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.

According to Theodorson and Theodorson, ‘kinship is a social relationship based upon family relatedness’. The nature of relationship which may be consanguineal or affinal determines the rights and obligations of related persons. A **kin group** is group united by ties of blood or marriage. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal. According to Theodorson, ‘kinship system is 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’. According to Murdock, ‘kinship is a structured system of relationship in which kin are bound to one another by complex inter-locking ties’.

### Types of Kinship

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*. There are 151 types of tertiary kin. Lastly, the primary kin of tertiary kin are called *distant kin*. Their number is very large. Kinship relationship characterizes every relationship between kin, and it determines reciprocal behaviour.

Part of the reciprocal behaviour characterizing every relationship between kin, consists of a verbal element, i.e., 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’, i.e., combination of personal and kinship terms; for example, Suresh’s father, Pinki’s mother, and so forth. Murdock has classified kinship terms on three bases:

- (i) **Mode of use of kinship terms:** This refers to the kinship term employed either in direct address (*term of address*) or in indirect reference (*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 overlapping; 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.

- (ii) 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), *duhitr* (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).
- (iii) 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 and mother’s father), cousin (used for father’s brother’s son and mother’s sister’s son), brother-in-law (used for sister’s husband and 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 term arises only by 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).

### Importance of Kinship

Next to 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 4 to 5 families or as many as 20 to 35 families. The important kinship groups after the family are *vansh* (lineage) and *gotra* (clan).

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*Vansh* is an extension of family. It is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from a known (and real) common ancestor. *Vansh* is based on more precise and specific genealogy. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal.

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

A main link among the families of a *vansh* 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. The *Vansh* fellows also cooperate for economic purposes.

The *vansh* passes into *gotra* which is also a unilateral kin group but is larger than the *vansh*. It has a mythical ancestor and is exogamous. Each person inherits the *gotra* of his father. According to T.N. Madan, '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 cooperation.

The *vansh* relations are limited in time and space, whereas 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. Cooperation within the *gotra* depends on economic factors as well as distance in place of residence. Today, the functions of *gotra* are minimal and is now limited for regulating marriage.

A man's relations with his feminal kin, *i.e.*, 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 neices and nephews on different occasions. The feminal kinsmen, are more concerned with the individual and his problems as a person than as a member of a group. Hence we can say that feminal relationships help to integrate each person and each village into a social network of villages that affect many aspects of village life.

### Features of Kinship in Different Zones

#### Northern zone

The socio-cultural correlates of kinship system are *language*, *caste* and *region* (plain and hilly). In addition to these three factors, it is possible to talk of kinship organization on the collective bases of caste and zone. Though kinship behaviour

in the northern zone changes slightly from region to region and within each region from caste to caste, yet comparative study shows that it is possible to talk of an *ideal* northern pattern referring to practices and attitudes generally found to be common among the majority of castes. Some important features/folkways of the kinship organization of the northern zone are as follows:

- (i) Kin junior to 'ego' are addressed by their personal names and senior to ego by the kinship term.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) The principle of unity of generations is observed (for example, great-grandfather and grandfather are given same respect as father).
- (iv) Within the same generation, the older and the younger kin are kept distinct.
- (v) The duties and behaviour patterns of the members of three generations are strictly regulated.
- (vi) 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.
- (vii) Marriage among close kin is not permitted.
- (viii) After marriage, a girl is not expected to be free with her parents-in-law; but when she becomes a mother, she achieves position of respect and power, and restrictions on her are lessened.
- (ix) The family is so structured that children, parents and grandparents either live together or social kinship obligations towards them are clearly met.
- (x) 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.

### Central zone

The important features of kinship in Central India are:

- (i) Consanguinity is the main consideration which rules marriage.
- (ii) The kinship terminology shows intimacy and closeness between various kin. The relations between kin 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.
- (iii) Many castes are divided into exogamous clans. Among some castes, the exogamous clans are arranged in hypergamous hierarchy.

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- (iv) Some castes like Marathas and Kunbis practice bride-price too, though dowry custom also exists among them.
- (v) In Gujarat, *mamera*-type of cousin marriage (with mother's brother) and levirate (marriage with husband's brother) are practised by some castes.
- (vi) The custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages as well as unequal marriages. Such marriages are practised even today.
- (vii) In Maharashtra, the clan organization of the Marathas is similar to that of the Rajputs which is 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*.
- (viii) Though the kinship terms are mostly northern yet 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 term *akka*, *tai* and *mai* for sister.
- (ix) Though the family system in Maharashtra is patrilineal and patrilocal, yet in castes like Marathas, the wife 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.
- (x) 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 clan obligations.

**Southern zone**

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 like Namboodris, there are important sections of population which are matrilineal and matrilineal like Nayars; also there are quite a few castes whose systems possess features of both patrilineal and matrilineal organizations like Todas.

Similarly, there are some castes/tribes who practise only polygyny like Asari, Nayars and yet others, who practise both polygyny and polyandry like Todas. Then there are polyandrous patrilineal groups like Asari and also polyandrous matrilineal groups like Tiyan, Nayars; and polygynous patrilineal groups like Namboodris but no polygynous matrilineal groups. There are patrilineal joint families and also matrilineal joint families. Matrilineal joint family, called *Tarwad*, is found among the Nairs of Malabar in Travancore and a few other groups.

The important characteristics of *Tarwad* are:

- (i) The property of *Tarwad* is the property of all males and females belonging to it.
- (ii) Unmarried sons belong to mother's *tarward*, but married sons belong to their wife's *Tarwad*.
- (iii) Manager of *Tarwad* property is oldest male member in the family, called *Karnavan* (his wife is called *Ammayi*).
- (iv) *Karnmavan* 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.
- (v) 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 descendants in the female line'.

The following changes may be noted in *Tarwad* after the 1912 Act:

- (a) The *Tarwad* property can now be divided.
- (b) The authority of *Karnavan* has now become limited.
- (c) The members of *Tarwad* have now become entitled to maintenance outside the ancestral house.
- (d) The ancestor worship of *Karnavan* is now no longer common.
- (e) The relations between husband and wife have now become informal and personal and more close and intimate.
- (f) The self-acquired property of a member of a *Tarward* after his death, now goes to his widow and children, and in their absence to mother and mother's mother.

**Clan organization and marriage rules in south:** A caste is divided into five exogamous clans. The important characteristics of clan organization are:

- (i) Each clan possesses a name of some animal or a plant or some other object.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) In marriage, there is not only the rule of clan exogamy but also of family exchange of daughters.
- (iv) 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 *bahnoi* (SiHu); the term used for *sasur* (HuFa) is also used for *bhabhi's father* (BrWiFa).
- (v) Marriage between children of two sisters, is not permissible.

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- (vi) The marriage with wife's younger sister is practised. Also, two sisters can marry two brothers in one family.
- (vii) 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. However, today cross-cousin marriage, especially the uncle-niece marriage, is a thing of the past.
- (viii) 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; and a man cannot marry his mother's sister's daughter.
- (ix) Marriage is dependent on the chronological age differences. One example is that the marriage of grandfather and granddaughter is possible in south.
- (x) Marriage is not arranged with a view to widening a kin group, but each marriage strengthens already existing bonds and makes doubly near those people who were already very near kin.
- (xi) A girl has to marry a person who belongs to the groups older than her, i.e., *tam-mum*, and also to the group younger than her parents, i.e., she can marry any of her older cross-cousins. A boy must marry in a *tam-pin* group and to one who is a child of a group of *tam-mum*.
- (xii) In south, a girl after marriage does not enter the house of strangers. One's husband is one's mother's brother's son and so on. Marriage in the south, 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

- (i) In the south, organization of kin is arranged according to age categories in the two groups, i.e., older than Ego (*tam-mum*) and younger than Ego (*tam-pin*).
- (ii) No special norms of behaviour are evolved for married girls in the south; whereas in the north, many restrictions are imposed on them.
- (iii) In the north, marriage is to widen the kinship group while in the south it is to strengthen already existing bonds.
- (iv) Marriage does not symbolize woman's separation from her father's house in the south but in the north, a woman becomes a casual visitor to her parents' family.
- (v) In the south, an Ego has some kin who are his blood relatives only and others who are his blood relatives and affinal kin at the same time.
- (vi) In a southern family, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth and family of marriage as found in the northern family. In the north, no member from Ego's family of orientation i.e., of father, mother, brother and sister can also become a member of his family of marriage; but this is possible in the south.

- (vii) 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.
- (viii) 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.

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### Eastern zone

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

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. Caste and linguistic groups may help an individual from time to time but his most staunch, trustworthy and loyal supporters could only be his nearest kin. It is, therefore, necessary that a person must not only strengthen his bonds with kin but should also try to enlarge his circle of kin. Cousin marriages, preferential mating, exchange rules and the marriage norms which circumvent the field of mate selection are now so changing that kinship relations through marriage are being extended and a person is able to get their help in seeking power and the status-lift that power can bring.

### Kinship Usages

We now study the behaviour patterns of different kins. Every relationship involves a particular type of behaviour. The behaviour of a son towards his father is one of respect while the behaviour of husband towards wife is one of love. There are some usages which regulate the behaviour of different kin. These usages are called 'kinship usages'. Some of these usages are the following:

- (i) **Avoidance:** In almost all societies, the usage of avoidance is observed in one form or another. It means that the two kins should remain away from each other. They should not only avoid sexual relationship but in some cases avoid seeing the face of each other. Thus, a father-in-law should avoid daughter-in-law. The *purdah* system illustrates the usage of avoidance. Different explanations have been given for the usage of avoidance. According to Radcliff Brown and G. P. Murdock, 'avoidance serves to forestall further and more serious trouble between relatives'. According to the Freudian explanation, avoidances represent a sort of institutionalized neurotic symptom.

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**(ii) Joking relationship:** Under it, a relation is permitted to tease or make fun of the other. The relationship between *devar-bhabhi*, *jija-sali* is joking relationship. The joking may amount to exchange of abuse and vulgar references to sex.

**(iii) Teknonymy:** The word 'teknonymy' is a Greek word. According to this usage, a kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to through another kin. A kin becomes the medium of reference between two kins. Thus, in traditional Hindu family a wife does not utter the name of her husband. She calls him through her son or daughter. He is referred to by her as the father of *Munni* or *Sonu*.

**(iv) Avunculate:** This kinship usage is a peculiar feature of matriarchal system. It gives to the maternal uncle (*mama*) a prominent place in the life of his nephews and nieces. He has special obligations towards them which exceed those of father. The maternal uncle has a prior right over their loyalties. He comes first among all male relatives.

**(v) Amitate:** When a special role is given to the father's sister (*buā*), it is known as amitate. The father's sister gets more respect than the mother's.

**(vi) Couvade:** This queer usage is found among many primitive tribes like the Khasi and the Toda. Under this usage, the husband is made to lead the life of an invalid along with his wife whenever she gives birth to a child. He refrains from active work and takes sick diet. He observes the same taboos which are observed by his wife. This kinship usage thus involves the husband and wife.

#### Check Your Progress

1. Name the main categories of kinship.
2. List three important characteristics of *Tarwad*.
3. Mention the important tribes existing in eastern India.

### 6.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin.
2. Three important characteristics of *Tarwad* are the following:
  - (i) The property of *Tarwad* is the property of all males and females belonging to it.
  - (ii) Unmarried sons belong to mother's *tarward*, but married sons belong to their wife's *Tarwad*.

(iii) Manager of *Tarwad* property is oldest male member in the family, called *Karnavan* (his wife is called *Ammayi*).

3. The important tribes existing in eastern India are: Khasi, Birhor, Ho, Munda and Uraon.

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### 6.4 SUMMARY

- In every society, a male at some time in his life, plays the roles of a husband, a father and a son and a brother in some family; and a female plays the roles of a wife, a mother and a daughter and a sister.
- 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. This fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to kinship system.
- A kin group is group united by ties of blood or marriage. Most kin groups, other than the family, are consanguineal.
- There are mainly four kinship categories: primary kin, secondary kin, tertiary kin, and distant kin.
- Part of the reciprocal behaviour characterizing every relationship between kin, consists of a verbal element, i.e., the terms by which each addresses the other.
- Next to 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.
- *Vansh* is an extension of family. It is a consanguineous unilateral descent group whose members trace themselves from a known (and real) common ancestor. *Vansh* is based on more precise and specific genealogy. It may be either patrilineal or matrilineal.
- A man's relations with his feminal kin, i.e., kin related through his mother, his married sisters, his wife and his married daughters, are equally important in his life.
- There are more tribes than caste Hindus in eastern India (consisting of parts of Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Orissa). The more important tribes are: Khasi, Birhor, Ho, Munda and Uraon. The kinship organization here has no one pattern.
- In almost all societies, the usage of avoidance is observed in one form or another. It means that the two kins should remain away from each other.
- The word 'teknonymy' is a Greek word. According to this usage, a kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to through another kin.

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## 6.5 KEY WORDS

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- **Kin group:** It is group united by ties of blood or marriage.
- **Vansh:** It is an extension of family.
- **Matrilineal:** It implies inheriting or determining descent through the female line.
- **Consanguinity:** This term denotes relationship by descent from a common ancestor.

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## 6.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Define the term 'kinship' in your own words.
2. What is the importance of kinship in Indian society?
3. Mention the important features of kinship in Central India.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the categories of kinship.
2. Compare and contrast the kinship system existing in North and South India.
3. Examine the kinship usages existing in India.

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## 6.7 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 7 MARRIAGE

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### Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
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## 7.0 INTRODUCTION

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Marriage, family, and kinship are the most sought-after subjects for study in sociology. Marriage is especially so, as it is the foundation of family and the family is the foundation of social life. The ties of family and marriage give rise to kinship. Indian society is divided into many religious and cultural groups. Therefore, there is a lot of diversity in matters of marriage in India. Every religious group has its own customs and procedures of marriage. Marriage and kinship are aspects of regional cultures. Therefore, it is not possible to talk of marriage in India at the level of all India generality. Sociologists have studied marriage in India around the three broader religious groups: Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In this unit, we will discuss the concept of marriage among the major religions in India in detail.

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## 7.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Describe the meaning of marriage according to different religions
- Explain the recent changing trends in the marriages
- Analyse the legal aspects associated with marriage



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## 7.2 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE

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According to Edward Westermarck, ‘marriage is the more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring’. It is ‘a contract for the production and maintenance of children’, as per Malinowski. ‘Marriage is a socially sanctioned sex relationship involving two or more people of the opposite sex, whose relationship is expected to endure beyond the time required for gestation and the birth of children’, opined Duncan Mitchell. It is ‘the public joining together, under socially specified regulations of a man and woman as husband and wife’ according to Alfred McClung Lee.

### 7.2.1 Characteristics of Marriage

The general characteristics of marriage are as follows:

- **Universality:** Marriage is more or less a universal institution. It is found among the pre-literate as well as literate people. It is enforced as a social rule in some of the societies. Among the Hindus, marriage is a sacrament which is regarded as more or less obligatory. According to the Chinese philosopher Confucius, an individual who remains unmarried throughout his life commits a great crime.
- **Relationship between man and woman:** Marriage is a union of man and woman. It indicates relationship between one or more men to one or more women. *Who should marry whom? One should marry how many?*—are the questions which represent social rules regarding marriage which differ significantly.
- **Marriage bond is enduring:** Marriage indicates a long lasting bond between the husband and wife. Hence, it is not coextensive with sex life. Marital relationship between man and woman lasts even after the sexual satisfaction is obtained. The Hindus, for example, believe that marriage is a sacred bond between the husband and wife which even the death cannot break.
- **Marriage requires social approval:** A union of man and woman becomes a marital bond only when the society gives its approval. When a marriage is given the hallmark of social approval, it becomes a legal contract.
- **Marriage is associated with some civil or religious ceremony:** Marriage gets its social recognition through some ceremony which may have its own rites, rituals, customs, formalities, etc. It means marriage has to be concluded in a public and solemn manner. Sometimes it receives as a sacrament the blessings of religion. Marriage among the Hindus, is connected with rituals such as—*Homa, Saptapadi, Panigrahana, Mangalya-Dharana*, etc.

- **Marriage creates mutual obligations:** Marriage imposes certain rights and duties on both the husband and wife—both are required to support each other and their children.

### 7.2.2 Significance of Marriage

The importance of marriage reflects in the following functions that it performs:

- **Regulation of sex life:** In conservative societies, it is considered that marriage an important method to regulate the sex life of man. Sexual impulse, in considered to be, very powerful in man. He is exposed to its influence throughout his life. This impulse must be controlled and regulated in a proper manner to avoid chaos and confusion in society. Marriage has come to be such a regulative means. In fact, it is often called the ‘licence for sex life’.
- **Regulation of sex relations:** Marriage prohibits sexual relations between father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister, etc. Such a kind of prohibition is called ‘incest taboo’. Marriage also puts restrictions on the pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations.
- **Marriage leads to the establishment of family:** Sexual satisfaction offered by marriage results in self-perpetuation i.e., marriage insists on the couple to establish a family of procreation. It is marriage which determines the lineage of the newborn individual. Inheritance and succession follow the rule of descent.
- **Provides for economic cooperation:** Marriage makes division of labour possible on the basis of sex. Partners of marriage distribute work among themselves and perform them. In the modern industrial societies, we find husband and wife working outside the family to get more income to elevate their economic status.
- **Marriage contributes to emotional and intellectual inter-stimulation:** Marriage brings life-partners together and helps them to develop intense love and affection towards each other. It deepens the emotions and strengthens the companionship between the two.
- **Marriage aims at social solidarity:** Marriage is not only a union of two individuals of the opposite sex, but also their respective families, groups and kindreds. Friendship between groups is reinforced through marriage. It has been said that by encouraging marriage between different groups, castes, races, classes, religious, linguistic and other communities, it is possible to minimize the social distance between groups and strengthen their solidarity.

### 7.2.3 Forms of Marriage

The main forms of marriage are discussed below:

1. **Polygyny:** It is a type of marriage in which one man marries more than one woman. Though monogamy was the rule fixed by the *Rig Veda*, **polygyny**

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was in practice in ancient times and persisted till the beginning of the present century. Until the passage of the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955, every Hindu was theoretically free to marry a number of women. In fact, however, a very small percentage of Hindus were polygynous. It had become a social custom to have many wives as it increased the prestige of a person in society. It was usual for the princes and the aristocratic people to practise polygyny. The Nawabs and rich landlords used to have a number of wives. Muslims are permitted to take four wives each, even at present, provided all are treated as equals. However, the actual incidence of polygyny among Muslims is very small; only the rich and the powerful occasionally take a second wife. Christians are forbidden to take a second wife. Polygyny among the Hindus has become a thing of the past as The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, strictly prohibits it.

- Polygyny is not in practice in present times due to the following reasons:
- People no more stick on to the philosophy that one should have a son to attain *moksha*.
- The idea that the sons are required to give support in the old age has also died out.
- Maintaining too many wives is highly expensive, and hence not possible for the majority to do so.
- Under the changed socio-economic and educational conditions, women themselves are not ready to accept the status of a second wife at home. Most of the women are not ready to lower their social status by giving consent to polygyny.
- People are highly convinced that monogamy is the most ideal and, at the same time, the most practicable form of marriage.

2. **Polyandry:** It is a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man. It is very less common than polygyny. A few Kerala castes practised polyandry until recently and it is not unlikely that it still continues to be practised to some extent in remote places. The Todas and Kotas of the Nilgiris, the Khasa of Jaunsar Bawar (Dehradun district) and a few other North Indian castes also practice polyandry. The Todas formerly practised female infanticide, and this meant that there were fewer women than men, a condition which compelled them to practice polyandry.

3. **Monogamy:** It is a form of marriage in which one man marries one woman. It is commonly practised in Indian society, except in case of Muslims. Ever since the *Vedic* times in India, monogamy has been the dominant form of marriage being practised by the Hindus. In fact, every modern society supports monogamy as the most suitable form of marriage. Monogamy produces the highest type of love and affection between husband and wife which contributes to family peace, solidarity and happiness.

4. **Hypergamy/*Anuloma* marriage:** During the *Vedic* age, inter-class marriages used to take place in the form of *anuloma*; a social practice according to which a boy from upper varna/caste/class can marry a girl from lower varna/caste/class. *Anuloma* marriage was recommended by the ancient Hindu *shastrakars* for the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, and the *Vaishyas*. But marriage of a *Shudra* girl with a higher *varna* boy was condemned. *Manu* had stated that twice-born men who wed wives of a low *varna* would soon degrade their families and their children to the state of a *Shudra*. It was also enjoined that Gods would not eat the offerings of the men who perform rites in their honour with a *Shudra* wife's assistance. Hypergamy occurs in different parts of India; among the Brahmins of Bengal; Anavali Brahmins and Leva-Patidars of Gujarat; Rajputs in Gujarat and Rajasthan; Marathas of Maharashtra; and Nairs, Kshatriyas and Ambalavasis of Kerala.

According to M.N. Srinivas, 'hypergamy tends to occur where the structural gulf is narrow, in fact, it may be said to occur among the different sections of a single caste rather than between castes which are widely separated'. Educated Indians are critical of hypergamy, and especially, of the large dowries associated with it. Hypergamy has almost disappeared in castes such as the Nairs and Nambudiris, whereas it continues to flourish in some castes such as the Patidars.

5. **Hypogamy/*Pratiloma* marriage:** It is a type of marital practice in which a man of lower class/caste/varna marries a girl of higher class/caste/varna. Such cases of *Shudra-Aryan* connections are also recorded in the *Vedic* texts.

*Anuloma* or *pratiloma*, as a rule of marriage is an inseparable part of the caste system. According to Kapadia, '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'.

#### Check Your Progress

1. What do you understand by the term '*anuloma* marriage'?
2. How does Edward Westermarck define marriage?

### 7.3 MARRIAGE IN DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

The practice of marriage is not uniform throughout the country of India. It varies from place to place, religion to religion, caste to caste, and even class to class. There are multiple customs and rituals, which are performed in these marriages, which could have common elements or differs completely. This section discusses the different meanings of marriage according to major religions.

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### 7.3.1 Hindu Marriage as a Sacrament

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In Christian faith, sacrament is a token custom, where any common person connects oneself with the Almighty Lord. The Baltimore Catechism defines a sacrament as ‘an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace’. That connection, called inner grace, is transmitted to a parishioner by a priest or bishop and he makes use of detailed rules of phrases and actions in one of seven particular rituals.

In Hindu culture, marriage is a *samskara* (purificatory ceremony or sacrament). According to the Hindu religious practices, this rite is the last in the list of ten sacraments, which is used for admonishment by a person for cleaning one’s body from inherited taints. This perspective has also been agreed upon by a number of courts of laws across the country. In practical terms, a Hindu wedlock or marriage is considered more of a spiritual obligation and little of a physical comfort. In one of the judgements of Calcutta High Court relating to Hindu Marriage in the case of *Sandhya Chatterjee vs Salil Chandra Chatterjee* in 1980, the court has stated that it is ‘more religious than secular in character’.

‘*Vivah*’, which is a Sanskrit term, literally means the commemoration of ‘carrying away’ the wife to the home of the husband. Indicating a contrast from the above-mentioned judgement, it is clear that marriage has travelled a great distance from just being a simple ceremony to an entire bunch of wedlock ceremonies, sometimes even extending to a few days. In the view of the above context, the most suitable description of a Hindu wedlock is the one, which was given by R. N. Sharma. According to him, marriage is “a religious sacrament in which a man and a woman are bound in permanent relationship for the physical, social and spiritual purposes of *dharma*, procreation and sexual pleasure”.

The marriage has also been defined in the Vedas, according to which, “the union of flesh with flesh and bone with bone”. The Vedas give further clarity about the institution of marriage and state that “It is a union which the Vedas regard as indissoluble. As long as her husband is alive, the wife is enjoined to regard him as her God; likewise, the wife is declared to be half the body of her husband (*Ardhangini*) and shares with him equally, the fruits of all his acts, good or bad.”

*Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu) state that that a man who is not married cannot develop his personality entirely and must be called an unfinished and flawed man. Moreover, the women are only created to become mothers and men are created to become. According to *Manusmriti*, a man who is not married will not attain peace even after his death. The epic *Mahabharata* makes one believe that if a girl is not married, then she won’t be able to go to heaven and she will not be able to do so because she has not been in married life.

The perception of Hindu marriage as only a civil association or social contract is completely unfamiliar to the Hindu mentality. In the words of K.M. Kapadia, “Hindu marriage continues to be a sacrament; only it is raised to an ethical plane”. In common language, marriages in the context of Indian culture or more specifically in Hindu culture, is a divine association between a man and a woman for divine

attainment. The concept of Hindu marriage as a sacrament means that “as marriage is said to be sacred it is irrevocable, the parties to the marriage cannot dissolve it at will. They are bound to each other until the death of either of them; and the wife is supposed to be bound to her husband even after death.” After the performance of the marriage ceremony, the wife and husband are considered as one individual and for this reason the ‘Gotra’ of the wife is combined into the status and personality of the husband. In the ancient times, marriage was treated as so holy that the disbanding of marriage caused by reasons other than death was considered to be blasphemous and against the nature.

It also has to be acknowledged that the conception of a Hindu marriage as a sacrament is still carrying on even after the legislation of the Hindu Marriage Act, which was passed in the year 1955. The concept of Hindu marriage as a sacrament is in no manner contradictory to the provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 as this legislation was only made to specify precise circumstances leading to a valid Hindu wedlock and some justification for getting a separation and divorce validated by law. The theory and conception of divorce was never accepted or documented by the ancient laws of Hindu culture and thus, this legislation was a very important step towards modernization introduced in the Hindu society.

In Hindu law, marriage is considered as a sacrament, which is an unbreakable unification of a husband and a wife, without an end, but the culture has transformed through the course of time and so has the notion of marriage. Various authors in the ancient world have stated that a Hindu marriage is principally a sacrament but also has a characteristic of a contract. Additionally, a Hindu marriage is one of the few sacraments that are common to all classes of people. With the passage of time the institution of marriage has seen numerous changes. People these days do not consider marriage as a religious duty but mainly marry for companionship. Marriages are not even considered as permanent because separation is publicly and officially allowed.

It will also not be wrong to say that a marriage as per the Hindu law is neither just a samskara nor sacrament but the single samskara approved for women under the Hindu Law. As per Manusmriti, the Hindu marriage is essentially a gift of the bride. So, an important component of a Hindu wedlock is the ritual of Kanyadan. The ritual of Kanyadan completes all the obligations of a gift under the relevant Hindu Laws. Up to a certain extent, a Hindu wedlock is a gift and therefore, it is also a contract. Even though sometimes there are different viewpoints regarding the concept of ‘Hindu marriage as a sacrament’, but it is unanimously agreed that Hindu marriage is definitely a contract.

### **Traditional Forms of Hindu marriage**

The Hindu scriptures admit the following forms of marriage:

- **Brahma marriage:** Here, the girl, decorated with clothes and ornaments, is given in marriage to a learned and gentle bridegroom. This is the prevalent form of marriage in Hindu society even today.

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- **Prajapatya marriage:** Here, the daughter is offered to the bridegroom by blessing them with the enjoyment of marital bliss and the fulfillment of Dharma.
- **Aarsh marriage:** Here, a *rishi* used to accept a girl in marriage after giving a cow or bull and some clothes to the parents of the girl. These articles were not the price of the bride, but indicated the resolve of the *rishi* to lead a household life.
- **Daiva marriage:** Here, the girl, decorated with ornaments and clothes, was offered to the person, who conducted the function of a *Purohit* in *yajna*.
- **Asura marriage:** Here, the bridegroom gets the bride in exchange for some money or articles given to the family members of the bride.
- **Gandharva marriage:** This form of the marriage is the result of mutual affection and love between the bride and the bridegroom. An example of this type of marriage is the marriage of the King *Dushyanta* with *Shakuntala*. In this form of marriage, the ceremonies can be performed after sexual relationship between the bride and the bridegroom.
- **Rakshas marriage:** This type of marriage was prevalent in the age, when women were considered to be the prize of a war. In this type of marriage, the bridegroom takes away the bride from her house forcibly after killing and injuring her relatives.
- **Paishach marriage:** This type of marriage has been called to be the most degenerative form. In this type, a man enters into sexual relationship with a sleeping, drunk, or unconscious woman. Such acts were regularized after the performance of marriage ceremony, which took place after physical relationship between the man and woman.

According to D. N. Majumdar, 'Hindu society now recognizes only two forms, the Brahma, and the Asura, the higher castes preferring the former, the backward castes the latter, though here and there among the higher castes the Asura practice has not died out'. This view rightly describes the present position of the traditional forms of Hindu marriage.

Among the Hindus, marriage is of great individual and social significance. It is a socially approved union of man and woman aiming at procreation, pleasure, and observance of certain social obligations. The Hindu marriage has undergone changes in the last few decades. Three significant changes in the Hindu marriage may be noted as:

- The Hindu young men and women today marry not very much for performing religious ties but for lifelong companionship.
- The marital relations are no longer treated as unbreakable, or irrevocable, as divorce is socially and legally permissible.

- The ideal of *pativratya* has lost its significance for there is legal provision for widow remarriage and divorce.

### Endogamy

Endogamy is the form of marriage in which one must marry within one's own caste or other group. This rule does not permit marriage of close kin. Endogamous marriage is that which is confined within the group. As a matter of fact, endogamy and exogamy are relative words. That which is endogamous from one viewpoint is exogamous from another viewpoint. In the sub-caste exogamy of Hindus, the marriage is contracted outside the sub-caste but the same marriage would be endogamous from the viewpoint of the race or nation.

In India, the following kinds of endogamy can be found:

- **Divisional or tribal endogamy:** Here, no individual can marry outside his own tribe or division.
- **Caste endogamy:** Here, the marriage is contracted within the caste.
- **Class endogamy:** Here, the marriage can take place between people of only one class or of a particular status.
- **Sub-caste endogamy:** Here, the choice for marriage is restricted to the sub-caste.
- **Race endogamy:** Here, one can marry in the race.

### Advantages of endogamy

Following are the advantages of endogamy:

- Purity in the group is maintained.
- Other people do not gain authority over the group's wealth.
- It tends to maintain the sense of unity within the group.
- Women are happier within their own group.
- The business secrets of the group are kept intact.

### Disadvantages of endogamy

Following are the disadvantages from which endogamy suffers:

- It shatters the national unity because the nation is divided into small endogamous groups.
- The scope for choice of a life partner is limited due to which malpractices such as unsuitable marriages, polygamy, dowry system, bride price, etc. are fostered.
- It generates hatred and jealousy for other groups. This is the main root cause of casteism in India.

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**Exogamy**

It is the opposite of endogamy. In exogamy, marriage in one's group is not permitted and brides are sought from other groups. While endogamy exhibits conservative attitude, exogamy is progressive. Exogamy is also approved of from the biological viewpoint as it leads to healthy and intelligent offspring. But, this fact applies only to marriages outside the wider group. In the Indian society, more harm than benefit has resulted from exogamous marriages. Most people do not intentionally approve of marriages within groups but do so only when the group is considered as limited only to the children of one's parents or to two of their future generations. There can be no benefit in declaring marriage within group unlawful, when the group includes a greater number of people.

**Forms of exogamy**

The following forms of exogamy are found in India:

- **Gotra exogamy:** Among the Brahmins, the prevailing practice is to marry outside the *Gotra*. People who marry within the *Gotra* have to repent and treat the women like a sister or mother. This restriction has been imposed since people of one *Gotra* are believed to have similar blood.
- **Parivar exogamy:** Besides the *Gotra*, the Brahmins also forbid marriage between persons belonging to the same *parivar*. People who utter the name of a common saint at religious functions are believed to be from the same *parivar*. Thus, *parivar* is a kind of religious and spiritual bond. Marriages within the *Gotra* and *parivar* have been forbidden from the time of *Dharmasutras*.
- **Gotra of Purohit exogamy:** Among the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaisyas*, it is the *Gotra* of the *purohit* which is taken into consideration for the purpose of exogamy. In these, the ancestry is carried on not through the saint but some follower. Sometimes, the *Gotra* takes the name of the village where this first person lived. In this way, thousands of *Gotras* have come into being.
- **Village exogamy:** Among many Indian tribes, it is the recognized custom to marry outside the village. This restriction is prevalent in the Munda and some other tribes of Chhota Nagpur. Among some tribes of Baroda, marriage is forbidden within the village. For example, the Naga tribe of Assam is divided into *Khels*. 'Khel' is the name given to the residents of the particular place, and people of one *Khel* cannot marry each other. The Garo tribe is divided into two *Katchis* or *Phratries* called *Marak* and *Sangama*; between them inter-marriage is prohibited.
- **Pinda exogamy:** In Hindu society, marriage within the *pinda* is prohibited. According to Brahaspati, offspring from five maternal generations and seven paternal generations are *sapinda* and thus, they cannot marry. However, in several parts of India, the generation of the mother is not considered to be

*sapinda*. At some places, the prohibition extends over three maternal and five paternal generations. According to the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, marriage with the offspring of the maternal uncle or father's sister is improper. Among the Brahmins in the South, with the exception of Namboodari Brahmins, it is considered good to marry the daughter of one's maternal uncle. The Velum caste of Madras does not forbid marriage with one's niece, while in the Telugu-Tamil districts and among the lowly Brahmins, this union can be contracted with the daughter of one's sister-in-law.

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### 7.3.2 Muslim Marriages as a Contract

The Indian Contract Act, 1872 details the acts describing contracts in the country of India. This law was enacted by the British and it defines the contracts constituting conditions in which promises are made by the people. It has a legal validity and is enforced through constitutional rights and duties. It is described under the section 2(H) Indian Contract Act, 1872, which states the contract as “an agreement which is enforceable by law.”

A marriage in the Muslim religion is called a Nikah, which is both a contract of civil nature and also a religious subject, which can be discontinued through the process of divorce. In the Muslim society, marriage is ubiquitous as it ensures chastity. The religion of Islam has made it nearly binding for its followers to marry, for a variety of reasons. Prophet Mohammad has also emphasized that a married life is better than an unmarried life.

#### Muslim Marriage Act

In the year 1954, the Muslim Marriage Act was designed for the Indian legal system. This legislation manages the performance and commemoration of marriages in the Muslim society in India. As per the provisions of this legislation, both a husband and a wife have to give their free consent for the marriage out of their free will. A legal and conclusive contract either verbally or written is acknowledged as necessary for a credible Muslim marriage, which also gives a framework for the rights and duties of both the husband and wife. If one considers this from a religious viewpoint, the marriage in the Muslim society has generally been considered as a holy and sacred ceremony. Marriages in the Muslim context as is the case in other cultures are not free from various sacred and pious morals. Together with its worldly and materialistic facet, Muslim marriages even share the features of a holy union of two individuals meant to accomplish sacred ends.

As per the sacred books of Islam, like Quran and Hadith among others, married couples are rigorously required to be with each other and also have affection, devotion, and respect for each other. Gratification, affection, and devotion to one another has been said to be a noble act in Islam. Muslim marriage as per Islamic culture and tradition is treated as a sacrament as per the views given in the Quran and the traditions, along with the rites and rituals of Islam.

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According to the observation of Justice Mahmood, “Marriage among Muhammedans is not a sacrament, but purely a civil contract and though it is solemnized generally with the recitation of certain verses from the Quran, yet the Muhammedan law doesn’t positively prescribe any service peculiar to the occasion”. As per the description of Justice Mahmood, marriage in Islam is dependent on the offer from one person and the agreement or the approval from the other person. As per the above lines, Justice Mahmood’s viewpoint marriages in Muslims shouldn’t only be taken as a contract of the civil nature. According to him the Mahr (dower), in the context of marriages in Muslim culture, makes the marriages civil in nature.

Marriages in the Muslim community have always been considered as a contract and not a sacrament. Nevertheless, it has always been considered as authorised for various classes of people to have a valid and legal relationship and to give birth. In Muslim marriage, all the elements of a civil contract can generally be seen. Marriage as a civil accord is filed by two individual persons or by those people representing these two persons. Since the Muslim marriage is a civil contract, it also gives legitimate privileges and responsibilities to both the individuals. The principal intention of a marriage in a Muslim culture is to validate a legitimate (halal) intercourse between a man and a woman so that their children have legal identity whenever they take birth.

The contract of a Muslim marriage also imposes additional privileges and responsibilities for both the wife and the husband. Separately from the fundamental obligations of a ‘mutual good treatment’, which is of course not constitutionally described, the privileges and responsibilities are different for both the wife and the husband. These privileges and responsibilities in some cases are also mutual for example non-performance by one individual to carry out any particular responsibility may endanger their right for a specified benefit. One of the primary responsibilities of a man in a Muslim marriage is to grant compensation to a woman as and when Mahr (dower) takes place. The concept of Mahr (dower) is also quoted in the Quran, which is the holy book of Islam. Further, due to the concept of Mahr (dower), the married women are further entitled to a variety of privileges such as accommodation, clothing, and assistance, which is of course not been defined by the provisions of the relevant laws. If the circumstances permit, the married woman also get the assistance of a minimum of one attendant or helper to assist her in household tasks and be with her throughout the day as these kinds of customs were prevalent in the ancient times. According to the contract of a Muslim marriage if a husband has more than one wife, then all the women are entitled for an equal share of husband’s property and time or in simple words, all wives get equal share of whatever their husband has.

If one considers the various judgements and orders in the different courts of law in India, the one conclusion that can easily be drawn is that the institution of

marriage is generally a contract of civil nature as per the Muslim law in the country. As this accomplishes each and every requirement of a civil contract as per the Indian Contract Act, 1872 such as acceptance, free consent, and consideration among others. Finally, on further examination and scrutiny of Muslim marriage as a contract, it can be said that the marriage as per the Muslim traditions and law is neither a contract of civil nature nor it fulfils the conditions of being a sacrament. The marriages in Muslim culture are a combination of both a civil contract as well as a sacrament.

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### 7.3.3 Practices in Christian Marriage

The church in the Christian faith has invariably stated that marriage has a significant status for the Almighty. As per the code of United Church of North India, marriage is a holy ceremony and is sanctified by the Lord himself. According to the traditions of the Christians, marriage is a sacrament in which husband and wife are destined with each other for good or bad. Marriages in Christian culture are commemorated in Churches and the approval of the Bishop is needed for the marriage to be valid.

#### Christian marriages in India

The Christian marriages in India are both a blend of Indian and Western cultures. The fundamental spirit of marriage remains same as per conventional traditions, but in India an array of indigenous Indian practices have influenced the ceremony over the last few decades. In India, marriages are a captivating combination of tradition and Hollywood fashion. Generally, the pre and post wedlock ceremonies that take place are Indian. Below is the list of certain essential practices that are a part of Christian weddings in India.

#### Pre-Wedding Rituals

- **Engagement:** Engagement is predominantly the most important pre-wedding ritual in a Christian marriage. It is generally a sober and small scale ceremony with only close family members and associates invited. The ceremony of a man putting a ring on left ring finger of a lady indicating the marriage of both the individuals. The rings have to be sanctified by the pastor either in the Church or at the place of engagement. These days even the ladies put a ring on the right ring finger of a man. The ceremony normally concludes with the exchange of gifts between the two families.
- **Bridal Shower:** This ceremony is a party given by the girl's relatives and close acquaintances before her marriage. A gathering is organized where a number of activities take place and the bride is showered with gifts, which might be useful for her upcoming married life. A pink cake is given to the bride in which a silver thimble is concealed. The friend who eats the silver thimble is assumed to be the next bride. This day is said to be the day, when

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the bride get to fulfill all her desired wishes, before she begins her journey for a sincerely devoted relationship.

- **Bachelor Party:** This practice is equal to the bridal shower but in this a party is given to a boy by his relatives and close acquaintances before the marriage. This has been a traditionally western event but nowadays, this has found its way in India. In these events, the entry of girls is not permitted and male members of a family bond before the marriage ceremony takes place. Bachelors' party can take a number of forms from a sporting event to an adventure activity to just a visit to the boy's favourite destination and so on.
- **Rose Ceremony:** This is kind of a baptism ritual that takes place in some Indian Christian families, generally in the Southern part of India. This ceremony takes place just before the wedding and is equal to the Haldi ceremony in a Hindu wedding. In this, both the husband and wife take a ceremonial bath in their respective houses. They are anointed with oil, their relatives and close acquaintances soak their hands in the oil, and make a cross sign on the forehead. Oil is even splashed in the ears and head, followed by coconut juice or rose, which is applied on the various parts of the body. This is then accompanied by a rose prayer and dinner.

### Wedding Rituals

- **Welcoming of the bride:** On the wedding morning, relatives and friends of the bride go to her home with the wedding dress, which is sanctified by the pastor before it is given to her. The bride then gets ready and goes to the Church in a car which is arranged by her husband and is accompanied by their close relatives and friends. At the entrance of the Church, the bride is welcomed by the boy's relatives and is accompanied inside by the boy's best man.
- **The Wedding Mass:** Just before the actual marriage ceremony, a wedding mass takes place in the Indian Christian community. In this wedding mass, a number of sacred songs are sung by the pastor. The mass begins with a prayer and the persons present inside the Church can join the prayer, if they wish to do so. This is followed by the reading of the Bible from both the New and the Old Testament. The verse from the Bible is selected by the pastor, but any guest present inside the Church can read the same. This is then followed by singing the Psalm by the guests and finally, the pastor delivering the sermons.
- **The Wedding vows:** Once the wedding mass takes place, the pastor begins the actual wedding ceremony by giving an opening speech, in which, the importance about the institution of marriage is discussed. After this, both the boy and girl have to speak the marriage vows. Generally in India, the

marriage vows are selected by the pastor and the couple just have to speak after him. In the vow, they usually assure each other that both of them will never leave each other in all the good and bad phases of life.

- **Solemnizing the marriage:** The marriage ceremony is blessed in the first place by exchanging rings by the bride and the groom. Among the South Indian Christians, the boy ties a Thali around the neck of the girl. Thali is simply a Mangalsutra with a cross sign embed on it, which is attached in a gold or silver chain. The wedding dress known as Matrakodi is given by the boy's side to the girl, who wears it over her head. Then, the pastor blesses the couple and declares them to be husband and wife. Then, the couple seeks blessings from all those, who are present in the Church.

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### Post-Wedding rituals

- **Reception:** After the conclusion of the marriage, the husband and wife leave the Church, which is usually followed by a lunch for relatives and friends. In the wedding buffet, speeches are given by parents of the couple, and a wedding cake is cut in the honour of the newly-wed couple. This is usually followed by a dance and singing performance by the relatives and close friends of the bride and groom.

### Check Your Progress

3. How does R. N. Sharma define the Hindu marriage?
4. List the forms of endogamy.
5. Why is marriage a contract in Muslims, according to Justice Mahmood?
6. What is the post-wedding ritual among the Christians?

## 7.4 CHANGING TRENDS IN MARRIAGES

Since last two decades or so, the Indian society has seen an epic transformation in terms of its norms and traditions. This transformation has been observed among all people irrespective of their religions, caste, or class. The traditions are no longer upheld in the strictest of terms. The new kinds of relationships and marriages have been officially/constitutionally as well as culturally being recognized. Some of these major transformations are discussed in this section.

### 7.4.1 Inter-Caste Marriages

Inter-caste marriage is the union of a husband and a wife belonging to two diverse castes. The Indian society restrains marriage of an individual outside their own caste. In our country, marriages still take place mainly on the basis of Jatis (caste) and Up-Jati (sub-caste). The meaning of the above sentence is that marriages in

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India are inevitably associated with Jati Vyavastha (caste system), with its background in the religion. This certainly does not mean that inter-caste marriages do not take place in the country. They are on the rise because of a variety of factors such as schooling, employment, rise of middle-class, economic background, and rural to urban migration.

The country of India is still mainly a conventional society with stiff social class and religious arrangements. Two very important parts of this conventional society are caste and religion, which play a dominant role in the marriage of an individual. For an average Indian to even consider marrying in some other caste is still a distant dream. As per the survey in 2014, only about 5% of the total marriages that are conducted in India are inter-caste marriages. Though small, this survey clearly shows that a step has been taken towards the elimination of the rigid caste and class-based society in the country. This marriage system in the country is a very modern aspect of the society and still a great distance has to be covered before a visible change is noticed. Marriages of inter-caste nature in the country can proved to be a method of removing caste system from the cities as well as the rural areas.

### **Types of inter-caste marriages**

As you have seen in the earlier section, there are two types of inter-caste marriages:

- (i) **Hypergamy or Anuloma:** These types of marriages take place between men of higher caste (Varna) and women of lower caste (Varna). These marriages were not common but were accepted by the society in general conditions. These types of marriages were allowed by the society but there were some conditions attached to it. These types of marriages were common in the ancient Indian society. The most important aspect of these kinds of marriages was that Brahmins had the permission to marry lower caste women including Sudras.
- (ii) **Hypogamy or Pratiloma:** These types of marriages take place between men of lower caste (Varna) and women of higher caste (Varna). Hypogamy marriages were considered to be doomed by all the sections of the Hindu social class. Even in the present day society, hypogamy marriages are not encouraged among the different sections of the society. As far the rules of endogamy are concerned a good number of changes have been noticed. These types of inter-caste marriages have increased over the last few years.

### **Legal validity of inter-caste marriages**

A number of laws have been enacted in India to help intercaste marriages. One of the main laws was the Hindu Marriage Validity Act, which was enacted in the year 1949, according to which the marriages among Hindus will not be null or void if it is between different castes and the caste of the individuals will make no difference in any kind of marriage. This was followed by Special Marriages Act 1954 to help

marriage among various castes and religions. Further, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 was passed to validate inter-caste marriages.

Inter-caste marriages are on the rise in India. One of the main reasons regarding the increase is the decline in the social barrier among the people. In the Hindu culture, castes, and sub-castes were very much central to the theme of living a life. In the ancient Indian culture, the persons of each caste and sub-caste wanted to tie the knot within their own castes. Any infringement of this rule was considered a grave crime, the penalty for which was usually the expulsion from the community. Of late, however, the society is doing away with such strict codes in the name of love.

### **Pattern of inter-caste marriages**

The recent modification in the marriage pattern in the country is just a new occurrence because of a number of factors such as transformation, growth, and worldwide integration of the economy. A number of social, economic, and cultural aspects have also contributed to the increase in such types of marriages. In such types of marriages, a very important dimensional fluctuations is also taking place in the recent decades. Inter-caste marriages are generally more in economically developed states of the country than the under-developed ones. It is generally believed that with the advancement of the society, the number of inter-caste marriages will increase further. But these kinds of marriages in India have still a long way to go before they are completely free of caste bias. As such there is no general approval for these kinds of marriages and they still have not become very common in the Hindu culture, but the matter of fact is that their number has increased over the years.

The idea of caste integration should start from the big towns and cities and move towards the villages as the cities have a cultured, well-informed and conscious residents, who can make the transition very smooth. In India, inter-caste marriages, of late have received public encouragement and have been backed by authorities and celebrities. Even the Supreme Court of India has stated that these kinds of marriages are beneficial for the country and can also be a unifying aspect for India. Basically, there is no kind of bias to stop inter-caste marriages in the country. With the advancement of internet, the concept of inter-caste marriages has received a boost as in the online matrimony sites the individual has to declare that he or she is ready to marry outside his or her caste.

### **7.4.2 Inter-Religion Marriage**

Inter-religion Marriage also acknowledged as Inter-Faith Marriage have been customarily known as 'mixed marriages'. These kinds of marriages take places between a man and woman, who belong to different religions or faiths. In general circumstances, inter-religion marriages in legal terms are a civil contract between two different individuals, but in some cases they may also be termed as religious

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marriages. One point to be noted here is that these kinds of marriages are different from the notion of spiritual integration, social integration, sacred secession, and apostasy. In spite of the above differences, the above-mentioned points remain connected to the various aspects of inter-religion marriages in some way or another. Most of the faiths do not acknowledge these kinds of marriages, but allow them to take place under certain conditions.

### Special Marriage Act

In India as such there is no law to regulate inter-religion Marriages in the country. In the absence of any law, a legislation was enacted by the name of Special Marriage Act in the year 1954. This Act was a special form of law to help people of different castes or religions to marry. One of the highlights of this law is that persons who marry under this act are not even administrated by any personal laws. The Special Marriage Act is unique in itself as this law is not troubled with the person's religion. This law is applicable to all persons who wants to marry out of their religion or caste. One of its distinctive features is that this law is not only applicable to those persons who marry or register under this law, but also to all the Indian citizens, so that every person has a better idea of the law and marriages and inter-caste or inter-religion gains legal validity and social acceptability.

### Challenges faced

In any society or country if one goes against the rules, regulations, or established norms, it is natural that issues will arise as no one wants to be seen different from their league. Some of the peculiar challenges are as follows:

- **Objection of parents and in-laws:** The greatest issue of inter-caste, inter-state, or inter-religion wedlock is that the newlywed husband and wife faces serious condemnation from parents and denunciation from the society. Also, the husband and wife do not feel comfortable in their respective in-laws; families and houses. Every now and then, it develops into something terrible and upset the harmony of the family. It can build a condition, in which even the death of a senior family member may take place. It gets complicated for all the family members to give love, warmth, support and assistance to each other.
- **Mental challenges:** These kinds of marriages are generally based on passionate and emotional relationship. After the wedding, if the dreams/wishes of the man or the woman do not get fulfilled or if they are not able to adjust themselves in relation to social environment, approach or holy practices, they start finding fault with each other and starts fighting leading to all sorts of problems.
- **Volatility in family life:** The chances that these kinds of marriages will not survive are much more real and practical as all sorts of problems occurs in such types of cases. According to Elliot and Merrill in their book, *Social*

*Disorganization* (1961), in these kinds of marriages the chances of separation are much more factual because of unavoidable effects of passionate wedlock. Hence, it becomes very complicated to have a steady family existence by cooperating in the married life.

- **Adjustment of children with in the society:** Customs, traditions, and religion dissimilarities between the couple develop complication for the children, as they fail to understand which religion to follow and what to do when a dilemma arises. These kinds of marriages in the future may also create problems for the marriages for such kind of children. Even other cousins in the family and children in the society do not like to mix with them. Such children in most of the cases does not receive love and affection from other members of the family, especially their grandparents.
- **Additional liabilities on couple:** The husband and wife most of the times have to bear all their monetary expenses, in addition to their household tasks. The couple cannot anticipate or even think of approaching their parents or in-laws when a difficulty or situation arises. Sometimes these couples are also not given a right to inherit their parents' or family's property.
- **Deterioration of unity in society:** These kinds of marriages deteriorate the caste stringency and religious harmony among the different sections of the society. Due to inter-religion marriage the society loses many thinkers to the mass, which ultimately will stop the growth and development of the nation in the days to come.

### Present scenario in India

Inter-religion marriages have never been painless and straight-forward for the couples and their family members because these kinds of marriages tends to increase the feeling of communalism, which in turn makes the social environment more polarized. But in the recent years with the advancement of the social media, people are resisting such kind of marriages as they feel that they have to protect their religion at any cost.

However, the Supreme Court of India has said that no individual has the right to meddle in inter-religion marriage if the marriage takes place between two adults, who have given their consent to marry each other. The court while cautioning the role of community groups that generally functions as quasi-judicial corporations, stated that they have no legal validity in the legal and social framework of the country. The court even gave punishment to public authorities who did not fulfil their duty to help or take action against those individuals who did create issues.

### 7.4.3 Live-In Relationship

Live-In relationship is an understanding, in which, the unmarried couples stay with each other in the same living house for an extended period of time. This arrangement is the same as the institution of marriage and the couples live as if they are married

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to one another. This type of living arrangement is not acknowledged by the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 or any other personal law in the country. The basic difference between marriage and live-in relationship is that while marriage advocates adaption to one another, live-in relationships are all about personal freedom. The only law that gives rough legal protection and sustenance is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

### **Legal status of live-in relationship**

In a normal wedlock, the individuals have some privileges and obligations towards each other and society. In India, there are many personal laws for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians that administer and conserve the martial relationship of the husband and wife. Live-in relationship for the Indian society is an incongruous concept as neither the Indian legal nor the social system recognizes such couples; in India without being married, you are not considered a couple. The theory of live-in relationship is also surrounded by controversial issues such as physical relations before marriage and children being born out of wedlock. The children which are born during the course of live-in relationship, have no right over the property and wealth as they are not considered legitimate. However, recently, the apex court of the country has stated that children born out of live-in relationships are not illegitimate and have full rights over the family property and wealth.

Till 1978 such relationship was mainly said to be illegal but the apex court of the country in its judgement stated that these relations are legal and have the same rights as marriages performed under various personal laws. The court further stated that if the basic conditions are satisfied of a normal marriage in these relationships then there is no reason as to why these are illegal. The Supreme Court has even given five categories of live-in relationship in the important order in Indra Sarma vs V.K. V.Sarma case in 2013. According to the court such relationship comes under the preview of Section 2(f) of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. It further stated that in live-in relationship all aspects of the relationship should be studied careful before making any decision.

### **Pros of live-in relationship**

- In these relationships, both the partners have sufficient time to know each other and hence, can decide whether they want to get married or call off their relationship.
- Rapport and harmony in relationship are important for any successful married life and the live-in relationships provides the couple with enough time to understand each other. Even the experts state that the couple should know each other well, before making the most important decision of their life.
- In today's fast moving world, people want their space and freedom and hence do not like to commit to a full-fledged relationship and here is where live-in relationship can help the people to make informed decisions about

their life and future.

- For today's rapid and swift life, live-in relationship is a blessing in disguise as individuals do not want to give up their privileges and want no liability on their shoulders.
- In a conventional marriage, one cannot leave and break the relationship anytime, but this privilege is available 24\*7 in the case of a live-in relationship. This is much better than the prolonged process of divorce, which is very painful for both individuals and their families.
- Live-in relationship gives equal privileges in terms of legal and social framework to both the parties. Both the persons know they can end the relationship, without much of a problem. Hence, both respect each other in all facets of life.
- The pressure of society, family members among other things are not an issue in these kinds of relationships as the couple is not bound by any social or legal framework.

#### **Cons of live-in relationship**

- Live-in relationships involve full disclosure to each other, which can create a problem in their relationship. Impractical anticipation about each other can ruin the life of both the partners.
- These kinds of relationships are temporary in nature, in which, the partners' basic assumption is to just have a good time and move ahead in their lives, but in conventional marriages the focus is on long term commitment and hence is more stable in nature.
- Live-in partners are good for short term duration, but for a long term relationship these kinds of living arrangement, can prove to be a disaster, especially in terms of emotional stability.
- The temporary nature of such relationships leads to break-up even in the smallest of the problem between the couple, but if the couple are married then they will make all efforts to sustain their relationship and life.
- Generally, the life of an individual changes after marriage, but the live-in partners expect that their respective partners remain the same, which is not possible and hence these relationships are not recommended for a stable life.
- The fairer gender is often at the wrong end of such relationships, if this experiment is not a success. After a long term live-in relationship, it is very difficult for a girl to find a life partner who will understand the girl, especially in a conventional society.
- The kids born out of such relationships are the one, who suffers the most if the relationship broke off. Additionally, there are various legal and social

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problems that the child has to face, which can have a negative effect on the health and mind of the young child.

### **Present scenario of live-in relationship**

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When the concept of live-in relationship was introduced in the country, it was unthinkable for the people to follow this kind of alien theory. But due to the advancement in the society and a number of factors, the thinking has gradually started to change and more and more young people are coming forward to embrace this alien theory. The recent surveys and polls conducted on this issue, have shown the change in the perception of the young generations. It is clear that they want to adopt new methods of lives and be free from the conventional method of living.

Still a majority of the society thinks that live-in relationships are not good for the future generations as these children will not follow their culture and traditions, which in turn will weaken the nation. A good number of people still choose conventional marriage over the live-in relationships as they do not want to follow the unconventional way of life. Even the judiciary efforts to legalize this system has not made it acceptable to the society as a whole. The bottom-line is that live-in relationship is still a prohibited social practice among the majority of the society.

#### **7.4.4 Gay Marriages**

Marriage with the same gender is called gay marriages or homosexual marriages. In these types of wedlock, there is a union of two individuals belonging to the same gender, which is basically a kind of martial union between two girls or two boys. Most of the countries across the world do not acknowledge these kinds of martial unions, even when all the legal rules have been followed. The end result is that the partners do not gain the legal status of a spouse in the legal framework.

#### **Section 377**

As per Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, consensual sexual activities between the persons of the same sex is a crime. This provision was made in the year 1861 by the British in all their colonies. This provision made consensual sexual activities between the same sexes, a criminal offense as according to them, it was opposed to the natural law. The persons caught indulging in such activities had to face a jail sentence that was even extended to the life-sentence.

In the year 2018, the apex court of the country reversed this British era provision that made consensual sexual activities between the persons of the same gender, a crime. The full bench of the Supreme Court in an undisputed judgement stated that LGBTQ persons have the same fundamental rights as any other citizens of the country. Further, according to the judgement, the basic distinctiveness of an individual is very essential so any injustice should be subdued, changes should be

adopted, and equal rights should be guaranteed. With this judgement on Section 377, the country became a part of 17 commonwealth nations that reversed such acts, making homosexuality legal and did away with the tradition that was left by the British in their former colonies.

The Supreme Court of the country while giving its judgement on Section 377 was also of the view that an adult in the country has the privileges to enter into wedlock by their own choice, without anyone forcing them to do so. After the judgement on Section 377 by the honourable Supreme Court, experts have stated that the act of displaying any prejudice against the gay marriages or persons should be held illegal.

### **Gay marriages in India**

One of the famous proverbs about marriages is that they are made in heaven but nowadays this seems to be a very banal description because the word ‘heaven’ means something that is very sacred instead of a legal agreement in which two individuals wish to stay with one another and be a part of each other lives. Hence, gay marriages from a religious point of view, is considered repugnant as they are said to be of unorthodox nature. The resistance may result in deportation or exile of the concerned persons or in some extreme instances, even a death, in the name to save the religion or to follow the order of God. Gay marriages are generally said to be sacrilegious because wedlock are sacred and these kind of relationships are said to be of nefarious nature and the devil’s work.

In our country, people who indulge in same-sex relationships are often considered as criminals both in the legal and social framework. If the relationship becomes public, then the society even banishes them for lifetime. Such actions by the society compel the individuals to hide their orientation as they do not want to face society’s offensive behaviour and be treated as fugitives. But the historical judgement last year by the apex court changed the very definition of same gender marriage in the country and decriminalized such offences in the country. Due to the Supreme Court judgement, the same gender wedlock was given legal sanction. Although even without such legal sanction to these kinds of relationship, these people still lived with one another knowing that they have to face all kinds of hardships and embarrassment in each and every aspect of their life, but this in turn increased their promises to live with one another.

At the end of the day in spite of all the legal sanctions and Supreme Court judgement, gay marriages in the country has a long way to go before it becomes an accepted norm of the society. Before the concept of gay marriages becomes a reality in our country the society needs to have an exemplar change in its thinking in all the aspects. It is high time, the society makes a sea change in its thinking and understand that everything should not be considered from the viewpoint of religion but some issues should also be taken from the view of humanity and equity.

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**Check Your Progress**

7. What is the Hindu Marriage Validity Act all about?
8. State one of the challenges faced in an inter-religion marriage.
9. When did the Indian judiciary reverse the law of Section 377?

## 7.5 LEGISLATION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE

With the transformation in the norms and traditions of the society as discussed above, it is only fitting that the legislature accompany it as well. One can also say that the judiciary has made this transformation, swift by enacting laws in a timely manner. People, who are hesitant towards new forms of marriages or relationships, at least cannot hurt anyone. Another important effect is the psychological one, as the imposition of law more often than not make it acceptable among people's minds; if not consciously then at a subconscious level. Gradually, they begin to see the point of view of the people, who are in these unconventional relationships and accept them. Along with this, laws also safeguards the rights and safety of the people involved in a marriage. Thus, in every religion, laws are of primary importance.

### 7.5.1 Legislations Affecting Hindu Marriage

Many of the beliefs, values, ideals and rules of marriage laid down by the Hindu *Shastrakaras* have lost their original meaning and purpose now. Due to which, the Hindu marriage system had developed some defects. Attempts were made by some social reformers to remove these defects and correct the system. During the British rule, and also after Independence, legislations were passed in order to bring about desirable modifications in the Hindu marriage system. Some important legislations relating to various aspects of marriage passed from time to time are briefly explained below.

1. **The Prevention of Sati Act, 1829:** The glorification of the ideal of *Pativratya* had led to the inhuman practice of Sati. Widows were often forced to make a *sankalpa* to die after their husbands. Some were forcibly pushed to their husbands' funeral pyres. Raja Ram Mohan Roy took up the cause of women and impressed upon Lord Bentick, then Governor General of India to bring out a legislation prohibiting the practice of Sati. The Prevention of Sati Act, 1829, made widows' burning a homicidal act, punishable with fine and/or imprisonment. This legislation saved the lives of a number of widows, though it could not totally stop the practice.

2. **The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856:** This legislation was complementary to the Prevention of Sati Act of 1829. Though widows were saved from the jaws of death, they were subject to exploitation and humiliation. To improve the deplorable condition of the Hindu widows, the leading social reformer, Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar pressurized the British Government to make legal provision for widow marriages. As a result, the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 was passed.
3. **The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929:** This Act restrains the marriage of a child. According to this Act, marriage of boys under 21 and girls under 18 years of age is an offence. The violation of this Act prescribes penalty.
4. **The Special Marriage Act, 1954:** This legislation treated Hindu marriage as a civil marriage and provided legal permission for inter-caste, inter-religious and even registered marriages. According to this Act, the parties interested in registered marriage must notify the marriage officer at least one month before the date of the marriage. It insists on the presence of two witnesses for marriage.
5. **The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955:** This Act brought revolutionary changes not only in the marital relations but also in various other social aspects. The word “Hindu” in the Act includes Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists and the Scheduled Castes. The main provisions of the Act were:
  - (a) Conditions for valid marriage
    - Neither party (bridegroom or bride) has a spouse living.
    - Neither party is an idiot or a lunatic.
    - The groom must have completed 21 years and the bride 18 years of age.
    - The parties should not be *sapindas* of each other unless the custom permits such a marriage.
  - (b) Conditions under which divorce is permitted
    - The spouse must have been impotent at the time of marriage and continues to be so even afterwards.
    - Party to the marriage was an idiot or lunatic at the time of marriage.
    - Consent of the petitioner or of the guardian was obtained by force or fraud.
    - The wife was pregnant by some person other than the petitioner at the time of marriage.

The dissolution of marriage may be obtained on the grounds of adultery, conversion of religion, unsound mind, leprosy, venereal disease, renunciation, desertion for seven years and cohabitation not resumed after two years after judicial separation.

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### (c) Other important aspects of marriage:

- this Act gives permission for inter-caste and inter-religions marriages;
- provides for equality of sex;
- provides equal rights for men and women in marriage, divorce or separation;
- permits divorce on the ground of incompatibility and mutual consent;
- during judicial separation and after divorce, both husband and wife have the right to claim maintenance allowance.

6. **The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961:** This Act which prohibits the practice of dowry does not apply to Muslims. It prescribes the penalty of imprisonment or a fine, or both for its violation. This Act was amended in 1986 and thereafter its rules have become still more stringent.

### 7.5.2 Christian Marriage

There is stratification among Christians as in Hindus and Muslims. The two groups in which Christians are divided are: Protestants and Catholics. The latter are further subdivided as Latin and Syrian Christians. All these groups and sub-groups are endogamous. The main object of marriage among Christians is to get social sanction for sex relations and procreation. Also, religion also has great significance in Christian marriage. Christians believe that marriage takes place because of the *will of God*, and after marriage, man and woman submerge themselves in each other. The three objectives of Christian marriage are believed to be: (i) procreation, (ii) escape from sex relations without marriage, and (iii) mutual help and comfort.

The marriage partners are selected either by parents, or by children, or jointly by parents and children. While selecting partners, the focus is on avoiding blood relations, and giving importance to social status of family, character, education, physical fitness, etc. Restrictions on consanguinity and affinity among Christians and Hindus are almost the same. After the engagement ceremony, the formalities to be fulfilled before the marriage are: producing a certificate of character, and submitting an application for marriage in the church three weeks before the due date. The church priest then invites objections against the proposed marriage and when no objection is received, marriage date is fixed. The marriage is solemnized in the church and the couple declares that they take each other as wedded partner in the presence of two witnesses and in the name of Lord Christ.

Christians do not permit polygyny and polyandry. The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, covers all aspects of marriage. Christians practise divorce too, though the church does not appreciate it. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, refers to the conditions under which divorce may be obtained. The Act covers

dissolution of marriage, declaring marriage null and void, decree of judicial separation and restitution of conjugal rights. There is no practice of dowry or dower among Christians. Remarriage of widows is not only accepted but also encouraged. But it is observed that the grounds for divorce are too limited and harsh. Even as between husband and wife, there is discrimination in as-much-as the husband has simply to prove adultery whereas the wife has to prove another matrimonial offence along with adultery for getting relief. Even when both parties wish on mutual consent basis to separate and the courts are convinced that living together is an impossibility, no relief can be given. The wife is considered to be a property of the husband as the provision in the Divorce Act entitles a husband to claim damages from the wife's adulterer. The Christian law as it exists today encourages perjury, collusion, and manoeuvring. Christians need a law which should cater to the changing needs of time.

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### 7.5.3 Muslim Marriage

Let's discuss some of the legalities related to Muslim marriage.

Marriage which is held contrary to the Islamic rules is called *batil* or invalid marriage. Some of the conditions of invalid marriage are discussed below:

- **Polygamy:** A woman cannot marry second time as long as she has a living husband who has not divorced her. A man also cannot marry the fifth woman as long as the first four are alive and not divorced.
- **Marriage with idolaters:** Islam opposes marriage with idolaters. However, a man can marry a non-Muslim girl if he believes that her idolatry is only nominal. But a Muslim woman under no circumstances is permitted to marry Non-Muslims.
- **Marriage within the circle of close relatives:** Marriage with relatively close kin such as mother, mother's mother, sister, sister's daughter, mother's sister, father's sister, daughter, wife's mother, wife's daughter born to the first husband, son's wife, is not allowed.
- **Marrying a woman during her *iddat* period:** No Muslim woman is allowed to marry a man as long as she is undergoing *iddat*.
- **Sisters becoming co-wives:** As per the Islamic rule, sororate is not allowed. Sisters cannot be married simultaneously by the same person. However, one can marry one's wife's sister only after the death of the wife or only after giving divorce to the wife.
- **Marriage with people of premature age and unsound mind:** Marriage with a man of unsound mind is regarded as invalid. Marriage of premature persons without the prior consent of their parents is also treated as invalid marriage.

## NOTES

**Difference between irregular marriage (*Fasid*) and invalid marriage (*Batir*)**

*Fasid* marriage is one which could be converted into *sahi nikah* by removing its irregularities. *Batir* marriages, on the contrary, cannot be converted to *sahi nikah*.

Examples for *Fasid*:

- Absence of witnesses at the time of making or accepting the proposal
- Muslim man marrying the fifth woman
- Marriage with a woman who is undergoing *iddat*.

Example for *Batir*:

- Marriage within the close circle of relatives.
- Muslim woman marrying an idolater.
- Muslim man marrying two–three women who are his sisters.

**Importance of *Mehr* or Dower in Muslim marriage**

Dower is the sum of money or other property which a wife is entitled to get from her husband in consideration of the marriage. As per the Muslim law, dower is an obligation imposed upon a husband as a mark of respect for wife. Its main purposes are—(i) to put a check on the husband to divorce wife, and (ii) to enable a woman to look after herself after her husband's death or divorce.

Marriage proposals and *Mehr* discussions normally go together. The bride's relative called *wali* plays an important role in the discussion. He only keeps the account of *Mehr*. Normally, a part of *Mehr* (in majority of the instances 1/3 of the amount agreed upon) is paid by the bridegroom to *wali* (an elderly relative of the wife who may be her own father or any other such responsible person) on the third day of the marriage. The balance is generally paid when the husband dies or divorces the wife. It is the right of the wife to claim the *Mehr* from her husband. She may even refuse to accompany him if the agreed-upon instalment of *Mehr* is not paid.

The Muslim law does not fix the amount of *mehr*. The husband is obliged to pay some amount as *mehr*. The amount to be paid as *mehr* is normally decided before or after or at the time of the marriage ceremony. The amount of *mehr*, depends upon the social position, descent, age, intelligence, beauty and other qualities of the bride.

The amount of *mehr* cannot be reduced but it can be increased at husband's will. A wife can voluntarily agree to reduce the amount or make a gift of whole of it to her husband or to his heirs. The amount of *Mehr* varies from one *dinar* upwards. There is no maximum limit for that. According the Islamic law, the wife has absolute right over the *mehr* amount. A widow's claim for *mehr* is normally regarded as her claim over her husband's property. She can retain the property till her *mehr* is paid; she need not wait for the consent of heirs for the possession of

her husband's property. In case the divorce takes place through mutual agreement, or by *wife's* initiative, her right to *mehr* gets extinguished.

### **Divorce as recognized by Shariah Act, 1937**

This Act provides for following three forms of divorce:

- (a) ***Illa***: If the husband swears by God to abstain from sexual relations with his wife for a period of four months or more, or for a specified period, he is said to make *illa*. If he sticks on to his words, then marriage gets dissolved.
- (b) ***Zihar***: In this type, the husband of sound mind declares in the presence of two witnesses that his wife is like his mother to him. Though marriage is not dissolved with this, it gives scope for the wife to go to court on this ground.
- (c) ***Lian***: In this type, the husband accuses his wife of being guilty of adultery. This, however, gives an opportunity to the wife to go to court insisting on her husband either to withdraw such an allegation or prove the same.

### **Provisions for divorce as per the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939**

This Act entitles a Muslim woman to seek the dissolution of her marriage on the following grounds:

- Whereabouts of husband not known for 4 years.
- Failure of husband to provide for her maintenance for 2 years.
- Imprisonment of husband for 7 years or more.
- Impotency of husband since the time of marriage.
- Failure of husband to fulfil marital obligations for 3 years.
- Insanity of husband for a period 2 years and husband's incurable diseases like leprosy, venereal diseases, etc.
- Husband's physical and mental cruelty.
- Marriage being pushed upon her before she attained 15 years, but she has to seek divorce before she completes 18th year.
- Any other valid ground which the Muslim law permits.

### **Legal Effects of *Iddat***

- In a divorce case, the wife involved is bound to wait for *iddat* period.
- During the period of *iddat*, the husband is obliged to provide for her maintenance.
- The wife is not supposed to give her consent for another marriage till the *iddat* period is completed.
- On the completion of *iddat* period, the wife can legitimately demand the *deferred mehr*.

## **NOTES**

## NOTES

**Social effects of *iddat***

- *Iddat* serves as a restraining influence on inconsiderate haste on the part of the husband and on the tempo of divorce. It gives time for the husband to think and act. The husband may simply take back the wife during the period of *iddat* and suspend the divorce.
- *Iddat* makes it clear whether the wife is pregnant or not, as the fact of pregnancy sometimes brings reconciliation between them.
- If it becomes apparent during *iddat* that the divorced wife is pregnant, the husband is recommended to take her back and treat her with consideration till the child is born. The child belongs to the husband if it is not born out of adultery. The wife also cannot marry anyone else until her delivery.
- The *iddat* period is normally three months. In the case of a widow, the duration is 4 months 10 days. According to Muslim Women's Protection of Rights on Divorce Act, 1986, a wife can demand from her husband her maintenance during the *Iddat*.

The unilateral divorce and polygyny among Muslims is so much criticized that many people clamour for uniform civil code regarding marriage. The Muslims oppose it because they not only consider it an interference in Muslim personal laws, but also because the content of the UCC will be mainly drawn from the Hindu Act. The arguments normally given in favour of the UCC are:

- National integration and secularism will be promoted.
- Growing communal and caste violence will be contained.
- The process of civil justice will be strengthened.
- The gender biases will be mitigated and feelings of equality among women will be perpetuated.

The arguments normally given against the UCC are:

- Muslims themselves do not feel any necessity for the change.
- The political groups are exploiting the religious sentiments of the people for creating their vote bank.
- 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.
- The UCC will generate heat, discontent and intolerance among different religious groups, particularly among minorities.
- 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 of 'unity in diversity'.

It may be concluded 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.

### Check Your Progress

10. What is the difference between *Fasid* marriage and *Batil* marriage.
11. What did the Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 entail?
12. What are considered to be the three objectives of Christian marriage?

## NOTES

### 7.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. *Anuloma* Marriage is an inter-class marriage, which used to take place during the *Vedic* age, in which, a boy from upper varna/caste/class can marry a girl from lower varna/caste/class.
2. According to Edward Westermarck, ‘marriage is the more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring’.
3. According to R. N. Sharma, marriage is “a religious sacrament in which a man and a woman are bound in permanent relationship for the physical, social and spiritual purposes of dharma, procreation and sexual pleasure”.
4. The forms of endogamy include divisional or tribal endogamy, caste endogamy, class endogamy, sub-caste endogamy, and race endogamy.
5. Marriage is a contract among Muslims, as according to Justice Mahmood, ‘though it is solemnized generally with the recitation of certain verses from the Quran, yet the Muhammedan law doesn’t positively prescribe any service peculiar to the occasion’.
6. The post-wedding ritual among the Christians is the reception, which involves a lunch for relatives and friends. In the wedding buffet, speeches are given by parents of the couple, and a wedding cake is cut in the honour of the newly-wed couple. This is usually followed by a dance and singing performance by the relatives and close friends of the bride and groom.
7. The Hindu Marriage Validity Act was enacted in the year 1949, according to which the marriages among Hindus will not be null or void if it is between different castes and the caste of the individuals will make no difference in any kind of marriage.

## NOTES

8. One of the challenge faced in an inter-religion marriage is mental challenge. These kinds of marriages are generally based on passionate and emotional relationship. After the wedding, if the dreams/wishes of the man or the woman do not get fulfilled or if they are not able to adjust themselves in relation to social environment, approach, or holy practices, they start finding fault with each other and starts fighting leading to all sorts of problems.
9. The Indian judiciary reversed the law of Section 377 in the year 2018.
10. *Fasid* marriage is one which could be converted into *sahi nikah* by removing its irregularities, while the *Batil* marriages cannot be converted to *sahi nikah*.
11. The Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929 restrained the marriage of a child. According to this act, marriage of boys under 21 and girls under 18 years of age is an offence. The violation of this act prescribes penalty.
12. The three objectives of Christian marriage are believed to be procreation, escape from sex relations without marriage, and mutual help and comfort.

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## 7.7 SUMMARY

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- Marriage is the foundation of family, and the family is the foundation of social life. It is often held in cities more as a social or a civil ceremony than a religious ceremony.
- The practice of marriage is not uniform throughout the country of India. It varies from place to place, religion to religion, caste to caste, and even class to class. There are multiple customs and rituals, which are performed in these marriages, which could have common elements or differs completely.
- Since last two decades or so, the Indian society has seen an epic transformation in terms of its norms and traditions. This transformation has been observed among all people irrespective of their religions, caste, or class. The traditions are no longer upheld in the strictest of terms.
- The new kinds of relationships and marriages have been officially/constitutionally as well as culturally being recognized.
- Many of the beliefs, values, ideals and rules of marriage laid down by the Hindu *Shastrakar*s have lost their original meaning and purpose now. Due to which, the Hindu marriage system had developed some defects. Attempts were made by some social reformers to remove these defects and correct the system. During the British rule, and also after Independence, legislations were passed in order to bring about desirable modifications in the Hindu marriage system.
- In the year 1954, the Muslim Marriage Act was designed for the Indian legal system. This legislation manages the performance and commemoration of marriages in the Muslim society in India.

- Christians do not permit polygyny and polyandry. The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872, covers all aspects of marriage.

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## 7.8 KEY WORDS

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- **Exogamy:** This implies that marriage in one's group is not permitted and brides are sought from other groups.
- **Endogamy:** It is a form of marriage in which one must marry within one's own caste.
- **Polyandry:** It is a form of marriage in which one woman is married to more than one man.
- **Polygyny:** It is a type of marriage in which one man marries more than one woman.

## NOTES

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## 7.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the social significance of marriage.
2. State the concept of Muslim marriage from the religious viewpoint.
3. How Christian marriages are different in Indian and Western cultures?
4. State the pattern of Inter-caste Marriages in recent years in India.
5. Define gay marriages from legal perspectives.
6. What are the legal effects of *Iddat*?

### Long Answer Questions

1. Explain the different forms of marriage.
2. 'Hindu marriage is a sacrament.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Describe various practices in Christian marriages.
4. Discuss the nature of Inter-religion marriage.
5. Describe the essence of live-in relationships.
6. Evaluate the different legislations governing the institution of marriage.

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## 7.10 FURTHER READINGS

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*Marriage*

**NOTES**

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## UNIT 8 FAMILY

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### Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 Definition, Structure, Functions and Classification of Indian Family
  - 8.2.1 Characteristics of family
  - 8.2.2 Distinctive Features of Family
  - 8.2.3 Functions of Family
- 8.3 Changes in Structure and Functions of Family
- 8.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 8.5 Summary
- 8.6 Key Words
- 8.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 8.8 Further Readings

### NOTES

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## 8.0 INTRODUCTION

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This unit will introduce you to the various aspects of family system in India. The family is the smallest unit in a society and is the tiniest form of social organization. Indian society is no different and the family is a very important part of it. It is one of the basic institutions of Indian society and contributes immensely to the social fabric of India. Family is a very important component of our social structure and occupies a central position.

Like elsewhere, the two major types of family in the Indian society are the nuclear family and the joint family. In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization. It has forced people to move out to new urban centres and seek employment. The Hindu joint family system found in the Indian society is a unique institution. It consists of members spanning horizontally (siblings) and vertically (generations) and living together with common goals and common assets.

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## 8.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- List the distinct features of a family
- Explain the classification of family
- State the functions of family
- Analyse the changes that have taken place in the Indian family system

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## 8.2 DEFINITION, STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONS AND CLASSIFICATION OF INDIAN FAMILY

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### NOTES

The family is the most important primary group in society. It is often called the basic social institution because of its important functions of procreation and socialization. Robert Bierstedt is of the opinion that ‘the family, almost without question, is the most important of any of the groups that human experience offers. Other groups we join for longer or shorter periods of time for the satisfaction of this interest or that. The family, on the contrary, is with us always or rather more precisely, we are with it.’

Sociologists have defined the family in a number of ways. MacIver and Page hold that the family is a definite and long-term group defined by sexual relationships that reproduce and bring up children. It may include other blood relations also but it is mainly formed by living together of man, woman and their children. The unit formed by their living together is called family. Ogburn and Nimkoff held that the family is an association formed by the sex relations of husband and wife with or without children. They believe that husband and wife or only the woman and her children or only the man and his children by living together can form a family. But the family is not limited to these individuals alone. Its size can be large also. People of many generations and various relatives can also live together in a family.

### 8.2.1 Characteristics of family

The basic characteristics of family are as follows:

- **Mating relationship:** A family is based on mating relationship, that is to say that family comes into existence when a man and a woman establish mating relations between them.
- **A form of marriage:** The mating relationship is established through the institution of marriage. It is an institutional arrangement made by the society according to which the individuals establish marital relationships among themselves. Marriages may be of the following types:
  - o Monogamy
  - o Polygamy
  - o Group Marriage
- **A system of nomenclature:** Every family is known by a name and has its own system of recognizing descent. Descent may be traced through the male line, i.e., patrilineal or through the female line, i.e., matrilineal or through both the lines, i.e., bilateral.
- **Economic provisions:** Every family has certain economic needs and the head of the family looks into ways and means to satisfy these needs. He has to ensure the comfort of the family members.

- **Common habitation:** Each family has a common habitation that implies that the members of a family must reside together under one roof.

### 8.2.2 Distinctive Features of Family

Family is a very important component of our social structure and occupies a central position. Its distinctive features are discussed as follows:

- **Universality:** The family is universal. There is no society in which some form or the other of family does not exist. A typical family consists of mother, father and their progeny. It is found in all communities.
- **Emotional basis:** The family is grounded in emotions and sentiments. It is based upon our impulses of mating, procreation, maternal devotion, fraternal love and parental care. It is built upon sentiments of love, affection, sympathy, cooperation and friendship.
- **Limited size:** A family usually means a small-sized organization. As a primary group its size is necessarily limited. Biological conditions are primarily responsible for the small size.
- **Formative influence:** Family helps in the formulation of the characters of its members and in shaping their personalities. Freud and other psychologists have proved that a child exhibits the same character and mental tendencies in adulthood, which he has acquired in the family.
- **Nuclear position in the social structure:** The family is the nucleus of all other social organizations and controls the social life of the individual. It influences the whole life of the society.
- **Responsibility of the members:** Every member of the family has certain responsibilities, duties and obligations. The smooth running of the family depends on how best the members discharge their responsibilities in coordination with the other members of the family.
- **Social regulations:** The family is guarded by social taboos and legal regulations. The society takes steps to safeguard this organization from any possible breakdown due to divorce, desertion or separation.
- **Permanent and temporary:** The family is a permanent institution. Since, it is based on the organic and emotional nature of man, it continues to exist. But family as an association may be temporary in character.

### 8.2.3 Functions of Family

The family fulfills a number of functions. According to Goode, a family has the following functions:

- Procreation
- Socio-economic security to family members
- Determination of status of family members

## NOTES

- Socialization and emotional support
- Social control

Kingsley Davis talks about the following four functions of the family:

## NOTES

- Reproduction
- Maintenance
- Placement
- Socialization

Ogburn and Nimkoff have outlined the following six functions of the family:

1. Affection
2. Economic
3. Recreational
4. Protective
5. Religious
6. Educational

The functions of a family mentioned above can be divided into four broad categories:

1. Biological
2. Social
3. Psychological
4. Economic

The biological needs of an individual are satisfied in the family. Thus, it is a very important function of the family. Firstly, the family institutionalizes the need of sex satisfaction through marriage. Social sanction is accorded to this need by the family. Secondly, the family also fulfills the biological need of procreation. The existence of the human race is dependent upon procreation and, therefore, this is a very crucial function discharged by the family.

The family discharges the various social functions also. According to Goode, it brings up children and helps in their socialization. Children learn their language, customs, traditions, etc. while growing up in the family. The family also discharges the functions of imparting socialization to its members, regulation of their behaviour and ensuring social control. The family transmits the familial values to its members and they do not deviate from the path of proper social behaviour.

In addition to biological and social functions, the family also satisfies psychological and emotional needs of its members. The members get love, adulation, sympathy and emotional support from within the family.

Another important function of the family is economic. In pre-industrial economies, the family is the unit of production. All members of a family contribute to the family occupation like agriculture, cattle-rearing, hunting, etc. The family

provides economic security to its members. It takes care of their basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, education, health, etc.

#### 8.2.4 Classification of Family

Though family is a universal institution, its structure or forms vary not only from one society to another but also from one class to another within the same society. Sociologists have spoken of different forms or types of families and they have taken into consideration different factors for the purposes of making such classifications. A few types of family classifications are discussed as follows:

- On the basis of marriage, family has been classified into two major types:
  - o Monogamous
  - o Polygamous
    - (i) Polyandrous
    - (ii) Polygynous

Monogamy is a system of marriage in which one man marries one woman. In almost all the modern societies, marriages are monogamous and such families are known as monogamous families.

- Polygamy is a system of marriage that permits the marriage of one man with more than one woman or the marriage of one woman with more than one man. Polygamous marriages or families are rarely seen in the modern societies.
- On the basis of nature of residence, family can be classified into three major types:
  - o Family of matriarchal residence
  - o Family of patriarchal residence
  - o Family of changing residence

When the wife goes to stay with her husband in his house after marriage, the residence is known as patriarchal residence. Such families are known as patriarchal families. Most of the families in all modern societies are of this type.

In cases where the husband stays in the wife's house after marriage, the residence type is known as matriarchal residence. Such families are known as matriarchal families and are predominantly found in tribal societies. In India, such families can be seen amongst the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes of Meghalaya.

A third type of residence system is the one where both the husband and wife stay in a new house after marriage and start a family. This kind of family is known as a family of changing residence.

- On the basis of ancestry or descent, family can be classified into two main types:
  - o **Matrilineal family:** When descent is traced through the mother, we have the system known as the matrilineal system. Families that trace

#### NOTES

## NOTES

their descent through this system are known as matrilineal families. In such families, lineage and succession are determined by the female line.

- o **Patrilineal family:** When descent is traced through the father or the male line, we have the patrilineal system. Families that follow this system are known as patrilineal families. Most of the families in the world belong to the patrilineal system and the lineage and succession in such families are determined through the father.
- On the basis of the nature of authority, family can be classified into two main types:
  - o **Matriarchal family:** The matriarchal family is also known as the mother-centred or mother-dominated family. In such families, the mother or the woman is the family head and she exercises authority. She is the owner of the family property and controls the household. The Khasis of North-Eastern India may be called mother-right people. Amongst them, descent is traced through the mother, not the father. Inheritance passes from mother to the daughter.
  - o **Patriarchal family:** A patriarchal family is also known as father-centered or father-dominated family. The head of the family is the father or the eldest male member and he exercises authority. He is the owner and administrator of the family property. His voice is final in all family matters.
- On the basis of nature of relationship amongst its members, a family can be classified into two types:
  - o **Conjugal:** Ralph Linton has given this classification. He is of the view that a family based on blood relationship is known as **consanguine** family. For example, the relationship between a father and a son.
  - o **Consanguine:** On the other hand, a family in which there exists sex relationship between the members on the strength of marriage is known as a conjugal family. The sexual relationship between the husband and wife is a basic ingredient of the conjugal family.
- On the basis of the in-group and out-group affiliation, family can be classified into two types:
  - o **Endogamous:** It is one where the social norms make it compulsory for members of the family to marry within the larger social group to which it belongs. For example, a Brahmin family in India would be in the nature of an endogamous family because the rigid caste system does not allow inter-caste marriages. Therefore, an Indian family is usually endogamous.
  - o **Exogamous:** In societies where there is no such restriction of marrying within one's own group, families are usually exogamous. For example,

members of a family belonging to one class can marry members belonging to another class in an open society.

- On the basis of size, family can be classified into three types:
  - o Nuclear or individualistic family
  - o Extended family
  - o Joint family

### **Nuclear or individualistic family**

In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization, which has forced people to move out to new urban centers and seek employment. Further, factors like individualistic ideology, economic aspirations and housing problems in urban areas have strengthened the nuclear family.

Murdock has further sub-divided the nuclear family into the following two types:

- The family of orientation
- The family of procreation

The family of orientation is the family in which an individual is born and in which his parents and siblings reside. He grows up in this family of orientation and stays in it till his marriage.

### **Extended family**

The extended family comprises members belonging to three or more generations. For example, a man living with his parents, his wife and their children is said to be living in an extended family. According to Murdock, an extended family 'consists of two or more nuclear families affiliated through an extension of the parent-child relationship, i.e., by joining the nuclear family of a married adult to that of his parents.' Thus, the nuclear family of an individual and the nuclear family of his parents can combine together to form an extended family. This type of extended family can be seen in India, China, etc. The joint family of India is also a type of extended family.

An extended family can also be formed when an individual and his several wives live together with the families of his several sons. This kind of extended family is seen in some African and Arab societies.

### **Joint family**

A joint family, though a type of extended family, is an important social unit of Indian society. Smt. Iravati Karve says that 'a joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular kind of kindred.'

## **NOTES**



In brief, a joint family consists of members spanning horizontally (siblings) and vertically (generations) and living together with common goals and common assets.

You will read about the joint family system in detail in the next section.

## NOTES

### The Joint Family System

The joint family system can be seen across societies in various forms of extended families. However, it is more prevalent in India and has certain peculiar Indian characteristics.

The joint family has been defined as a mode of combining smaller families into larger units through the extension of three or more generations. It has also been defined as one which consists of members related through blood and spread over several generations living together under one roof and working under a common head.

C.B. Memoria has observed that the fundamental principle of the Hindu joint family is the tie of *sapindaship* without which such a family cannot be formed. He defines a joint family as a kin group consisting of all the male descendants from a common ancestor, their wives and their unmarried daughters. Daughters, on their marriage, become members of their husbands' families. Normally, a joint family is composed of members of three generations. However, at times it may include members of four or more generations. All the members of a joint family are related to one another as *sapindas*.

In the Hindu society in India, the joint family, the caste system and the village system are considered as the three pillars on which the social edifice is built. It is a very old system and is regarded by the Hindus as a sacred institution having been derived from religion.

There are two types of joint family:

- Patriarchal joint family
- Matriarchal joint family

Both types are found in India. The patriarchal joint family is father-dominated and matriarchal joint family is mother-dominated. The patriarchal joint families are found among the Nambudaris of Malabar, the Mundas of Chotanagpur and the Angami Nagas of Assam. The matriarchal joint families are found among the Nairs of Malabar and the Khasis and Garos living on the Garo hills of Assam.

### Characteristics of the Joint Family System

Following are the important characteristic features of the joint family system in India:

- **Collection of generations:** The joint family consists of people belonging to at least three generations. Besides, it also has people related to each other and belonging to a particular generation.

- **Common roof:** Normally, the members of a joint family reside together under one roof. Due to housing problem, educational problem and employment problem, people are sometimes unable to continue with the joint family under a common roof. But they still continue to maintain contact and relationships with each other.
- **Joint kitchen:** Merely living together under one roof does not constitute a joint family. There has to be a common kitchen for the family and all the members must eat food cooked at one hearth. Separation of kitchen implies breaking up of the joint family. Normally, in patriarchal families, the eldest female member is in charge of this joint kitchen. The womenfolk of the family serve the food to the male members first and eat only after the male members have finished eating.
- **Common property:** The members of a joint family hold property in common. Melley observes, 'a joint family is a co-operative institution similar to a joint stock company in which there is a joint property.' The earnings of the family are pooled together and household expenses are met out of the pool. The joint property is managed by the head of the family who is known as the *karta*.
- **Joint worship:** The Hindu joint family derives its strength from religion and is associated with various religious practices and rituals. Members of the family pray together and have a common family deity.
- **Exercise of authority:** In patriarchal joint families, the eldest male member is the head of the family and his directions are obeyed by all other members. He exercises complete authority in family matters. Similarly, in joint matriarchal families, this role is played by the eldest female member in the family. This exercise of supreme authority by one member is a key feature of the joint family.
- **Arranged marriages:** In the Hindu joint family, the head of the family arranges the marriages of the younger members by choosing the prospective bride or bridegroom, as the case may be. The individual members of a joint family in India do not have the freedom to choose their life partners. They rarely challenge the decisions made by the elders and the family head. However, this trend is slowly changing.
- **Procreation:** In a joint family, procreation is regarded as a religious duty. As a result, the rate of production in such families is higher. As no birth control measures are adopted by the married couples, the size of joint families is usually big. However, with modernization, this is changing and family sizes are getting smaller.
- **Self-sufficiency:** In the past, joint families used to be fully self-reliant. The members of the families derived their economic, emotional, educational, recreational and other needs from the family itself. However, things have changed today and no family can remain self-reliant in that manner as inter-dependence has increased in society.

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- **Family obligations:** Members of a joint family identify themselves strongly with their family obligations. They discharge their duties towards the family diligently and the family, in turn, protects their interests.

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### Advantages of the Joint Family System

The joint family system has a number of advantages. Some of them are as follows:

- **Stable and long-lasting:** The joint family is more stable than a nuclear family and, therefore, it lasts for a long time. Even if a couple of members leave the family, it has no impact upon its stability and the family stands as a unit. Due to its durability, it is helpful in carrying forward the cultural traditions.
- **Ensures economic growth:** The joint family contributes to welfare and economic progress of the family members by providing the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter of its members. Further, it helps in productivity by contributing more hands to the labour force. Besides, in agricultural communities, the joint family prevents fragmentation of the family's land holdings.
- **Economizes expenditure:** Since, no member has an individual control over the family property, the family head ensures that they remain spendthrift. Joint purchases of household needs also result in savings.
- **Division of labour:** The joint family raises efficiency through division of labour. Due to the presence of a large number of members, a joint family divides various tasks amongst them. This is especially beneficial for a joint family in an agricultural community.
- **Provides social insurance:** The basic needs of relatively weak family members like orphans, widows, deserted, diseased, divorced, etc. are taken care of very well in a joint family. Thus, such a family acts as an insurance company for them.
- **Provides leisure:** Due to the advantage of numbers, work within a joint family is shared among the members and gets completed quickly. This allows the members to have more time for leisure and relaxation.
- **Provides recreation:** Due to the presence of a large number of persons of different age groups, a joint family is an ideal place for enjoyment and entertainment. The interaction between the young and the old, the games played by the children, the combined celebration of festivals, etc. all add up to provide valuable recreation to the members.
- **Provides social security:** A joint family, apart from acting like an insurance company for its relatively disadvantaged members, also provides social security to the aged, infirm and sick members of the family. In times of crises like accidents, the joint family takes care of the affected members. It is often said that a joint family takes care of an individual from his cradle to his grave.

- **Provides psychological security:** A joint family provides psychological security to its members by giving them a feeling of staying with one's own. It does not allow any member to develop strong individualistic mindset, thereby preventing him from becoming aloof and lonely.
- **Promotes co-operative virtues:** A joint family instills many virtues into the minds and characters of its members. Qualities like co-operation, discipline, sympathy, tolerance, sacrifice, loyalty, etc. are learnt and imbibed in such families. All the members get tied in a bond of love and sacrifice and promote the welfare of their family through their positive traits.
- **Ensures social control:** The joint family acts as an agency of social control by controlling the behaviour of its members. It teaches each member to think about the common interests of the family and sacrifice individual interests.
- **Develops a sense of tolerance:** The presence of a large number of members results in expression of divergent views on a variety of issues. The members learn to respect each other's views and this helps them in developing a sense of tolerance while dealing with the views of other members of the society. Such a sense of tolerance is good for any society as it leaves room for discussion and debate.

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### Disadvantages of the Joint Family System

It is not that the joint family system only has positive things to offer. It also suffers from many demerits. Some of such demerits or disadvantages are as follows:

- **Retards personality development:** Due to the overbearing nature of the family head in a joint family, the younger members fail to develop any leadership quality. They remain protected and become weak and shaky in life. They never get a chance to show their talents or develop strong personalities.
- **Kills individual initiative:** The joint family does not allow its members to develop their talents. Individual enterprise gets killed in such an environment. The young members do not get a chance to show their originality or creativity.
- **Promotes lethargy:** The joint family does not provide much incentive for hard work because everybody is assured of his food, shelter and clothing. This results in promoting a dependency syndrome, which is bad for the economy and society.
- **Disincentive savings:** Since basic needs of every member is assured, there is no incentive to save money and invest the same in quality assets. Besides, savings is not easy for the earning members as there are a large number of non-earning members who have to be taken care of.
- **Hampers privacy:** Personal privacy is badly affected in the joint family system due to the presence of large number of family members in the house.

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This is especially true in case of newly married couples who do not get the desired privacy to know each other intimately and share their feelings of love. This affects them both emotionally and psychologically.

- **Promotes quarrels:** In a joint family, chances of frequent quarrels among the family members are more due to the presence of a number of persons. This is truer in case of married women of the family as they come into this large family from different families with different upbringing. They usually do not get along well with each other and end up spoiling their relationships.
- **Adversely affects children's socialization:** Since, the parents are not able to devote exclusive time to their children in a joint family set-up, the socialization of the children does not take place in a proper way. Children remain aloof to their parents and get more attached to their grandparents. The values instilled by the grandparents may sometimes be not in tune with the modern times.
- **Promotes higher reproduction:** A joint family system promotes higher reproduction as there is no disincentive of giving birth to more children. Irrespective of the number of children that they have parents are assured that the basic needs of their children – food, health, education, clothes, etc. – would be automatically taken care of by the family.
- **Adversely affects status of women:** A joint family system is unfavourable for women. They are treated badly in the patriarchal joint families and are made to work like servants of the household. They do not get any respect for the work they do and have no financial or social autonomy. Sometimes, they do not even have a say in matters personal to them like their health, higher education, visits to their parental homes, etc.
- **Promotes litigation:** Due to the presence of common property in a joint family system, there is bound to be a lot of litigation and it does happen. A plethora of cases are filed by family members against each other to gain control over the family assets.
- **Limits social mobility:** Joint families restrict the social mobility of their members. They are not encouraged to adapt to the modern world and are forced to remain bound by traditions. This prevents them from accepting changes and moving ahead in life.
- **Delays decision-making:** Due to the presence of a large number of family members, decision-making is very slow in a joint family set-up. There are discussions and deliberations before taking any major decisions. While such discussions are good and help in taking the right decisions, its slow pace frustrates the younger members.

**Check Your Progress**

1. List the basic characteristics of family.
2. State one important function of family.
3. Mention the places in India where patriarchal joint family and matriarchal joint family exist.

**NOTES****8.3 CHANGES IN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY**

The institution of joint family has started undergoing change and is moving towards disintegration. This is primarily the result of the forces of modernization, which is transforming Indian society.

Industrialization and urbanization have resulted in the breakdown of the joint family because the latter is better placed to handle agricultural societies. With industrialization, family has ceased to be the unit of production as it used to be in an agrarian set-up. People leave their villages in search of employment in new industries coming up in urban areas and break their link with their joint family. Thus, the new industry-based economy has shaken the foundations of the joint family system.

Industrialization has been helped further by the modern means of transportation and communication. Bus and train services from rural areas to the towns and cities have enabled people to travel to urban areas in search of employment opportunities. This has quickened the pace of the decline of the joint family. With the spread of telecom facilities, especially with the easy availability of mobile telephony, people can stay connected with their families without staying together under a common roof. Due to this, the dependence of people on their traditional family occupation, which was a major factor for the survival and importance of the joint family, has reduced. They are migrating to urban areas for better employment opportunities.

The influence of the Western countries on our thinking and way of life is also an important factor that has changed the joint family system in India. The family structure of the Western world is characterized by the nuclear family. This is so because they base their family on the ideas of freedom, equality, love between husband and wife and communication. The Indian joint family has very little scope for all of these. Therefore, the younger generation in India prefers the nuclear family. The joint family is trying to adapt to this situation and the family heads are trying to provide more space to all the members by decentralizing power. Notwithstanding this, westernization has resulted in greatly reducing the importance of the joint family system.

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Indian women have managed to break the shackles of male-domination upon them to a significant extent. This has happened due to the empowerment of women through the forces of education and employment. For women to come of age, it was important for them to get out of the conservative and oppressive environment prevalent in joint families. The status of women was very low in joint families and an enhancement in their status is directly linked to the decline of such families. Thus, higher status of women can be said to have adversely affected the joint family system in India.

The joint family system has faced serious challenges from progressive social legislations enacted during the British Rule and after independence. Legislations like The Civil Marriage Act, 1872; The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 have eroded the pre-dominant position of the joint family system in the Indian society. These acts resulted in empowering women by giving them various rights relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance of property. This empowerment of women shook the joint family system in which women used to be treated with scant respect. As a result, joint families in India are reinventing themselves and women are being given the respect that they deserve. But the trend is towards more individualistic or nuclear families as they provide greater freedom and privacy to the young couples.

Another reason for the decline of the joint family is the shortage of residential space in urban areas. Since, houses are small; it is not possible for a large number of family members to cohabit. In villages, even if the houses were small, there were vast open spaces in and around the house, which is not the case in towns and cities. Therefore, the family size had to be necessarily small in urban areas. This aspect goes against the joint family system.

The quarrels among the members of the joint family are yet another reason for its decline. The presence of many members, especially the women members hailing from different families, often resulted in such quarrels. Nuclear families became the preferred option for people as they wanted to avoid such frequent quarrels.

The changes and the causes of those changes discussed above would indicate that the joint family system in India is disintegrating. However, scholars have pointed out, it would be wrong to say that joint family has been or would be completely replaced by nuclear families. Empirical studies by eminent sociologists like I.P. Desai, K.M. Kapadia, Aileen Ross, M.S. Gore, A.M. Shah and Sachchidananda have shown that the jointness in the joint family is decreasing whereas the nuclearity is increasing. They have pointed out that joint families would continue to exist in their evolved forms and would never fade away.

These scholars have found out from their studies that the joint family continues to exist but their sizes have come down. They are no longer the huge families with large number of members spread vertically and horizontally. The joint family has evolved to give way to a trimmer joint family wherein a maximum of three

generations reside. It is now a compact and functional unit. It now includes only the siblings and the father's brothers.

Therefore, it can be concluded that so long as the old cultural values persist among the people, the functional type of joint family would continue to thrive in the Indian society. The residential type of joint family would be under strain as people tend to move out in search of employment, freedom and privacy.

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### Check Your Progress

4. State any one significant factor responsible for the decline of the joint family system in India.
5. Name the various legislations which have eroded the pre-dominant position of the joint family system in the Indian society.

## 8.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The basic characteristics of family are the following:
  - Mating relationship
  - A form of marriage
  - A system of nomenclature
  - Economic provisions
  - Common habitation
2. The biological needs of an individual are satisfied in the family. Thus, it is a very important function of the family. Firstly, the family institutionalizes the need of sex satisfaction through marriage. Social sanction is accorded to this need by the family. Secondly, the family also fulfills the biological need of procreation. The existence of the human race is dependent upon procreation and, therefore, this is a very crucial function discharged by the family.
3. Patriarchal joint family and matriarchal joint family exist in India. The patriarchal joint family is father-dominated and matriarchal joint family is mother-dominated. The patriarchal joint families are found among the Nambudaris of Malabar, the Mundas of Chotanagpur and the Angami Nagas of Assam. The matriarchal joint families are found among the Nairs of Malabar and the Khasis and Garos living on the Garo hills of Assam.
4. The onset of industrialization is a significant factor which has resulted in decline of the joint family system in India.
5. Legislations like The Civil Marriage Act, 1872; The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 have eroded the pre-dominant position of the joint family system in the Indian society.



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## 8.5 SUMMARY

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### NOTES

- The family is the most important primary group in society. It is often called the basic social institution because of its important functions of procreation and socialization.
- Sociologists have defined the family in a number of ways. MacIver and Page hold that the family is a definite and long-term group defined by sexual relationships that reproduce and bring up children.
- Family is a very important component of our social structure and occupies a central position.
- In pre-industrial economies, the family is the unit of production. All members of a family contribute to the family occupation like agriculture, cattle-rearing, hunting, etc. The family provides economic security to its members. It takes care of their basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, education, health, etc.
- Though family is a universal institution, its structure or forms vary not only from one society to another but also from one class to another within the same society.
- Monogamy is a system of marriage in which one man marries one woman. In almost all the modern societies, marriages are monogamous and such families are known as monogamous families.
- In nuclear families, the members comprise the husband, wife and their children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization and urbanization, which has forced people to move out to new urban centers and seek employment.
- The extended family comprises members belonging to three or more generations. For example, a man living with his parents, his wife and their children is said to be living in an extended family.
- A joint family, though a type of extended family, is an important social unit of Indian society.
- The joint family has been defined as a mode of combining smaller families into larger units through the extension of three or more generations.
- The joint family does not allow its members to develop their talents. Individual enterprise gets killed in such an environment. The young members do not get a chance to show their originality or creativity.
- Since, the parents are not able to devote exclusive time to their children in a joint family set-up, the socialization of the children does not take place in a proper way.
- The institution of joint family has started undergoing change and is moving towards disintegration. This is primarily the result of the forces of modernization, which is transforming Indian society.

- The influence of the Western countries on our thinking and way of life is also an important factor that has changed the joint family system in India. The family structure of the Western world is characterized by the nuclear family.

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## 8.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Monogamy:** It is a system of marriage in which one man marries one woman.
- **Exogamy:** It is a system in which members of a family belonging to one class can marry members belonging to another class in an open society.
- **Social mobility:** It refers to the shift in an individual's social status from one status to another.
- **Nuclear family:** This family comprises the husband, wife and children. This type of family has become more common with the advent of industrialization.

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## 8.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What is an extended family?
2. List the characteristics of the joint family system.
3. What are the factors responsible for the changes in the Indian family system?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the various functions of a family.
2. Describe the classification of family.
3. Explain the merits and demerits of the joint family system.
4. Comment on the changes that have taken place in the Indian family system.

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## 8.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 9 GENDER ROLES

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### Structure

- 9.0 Introduction
- 9.1 Objectives
- 9.2 Overview of Gender Roles
- 9.3 Hegemonic Relations Between Men and Women
- 9.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 9.5 Summary
- 9.6 Key Words
- 9.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 9.8 Further Readings

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### 9.0 INTRODUCTION

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Patriarchy is a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political and economic structures are controlled by men. In contrast, matriarchy is a hierarchical system of social organization in which cultural, political and economic structures are controlled by women; however, a few (if any) societies have been organized in this manner. As the sociologist Virginia Cyrus (Cyrus, 1993) explains, ‘Under patriarchy, men are seen as “natural” heads of households, presidential candidates, corporate executives, college presidents, etc. Women, on the other hand, are men’s subordinates, playing supportive roles such as that of a housewife, mother, nurse and secretary.’ The patriarchal ideology reinforces acceptance of the maintenance of the hierarchical structure and authority of social institution and relations. It is a rationalization of the inequality and subordination, which is accepted by those who are in a subordinate position. This unit will familiarize you with the hegemonic relations between men and women.

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### 9.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare an overview of gender roles
- Differentiate between private patriarchy and public patriarchy
- Analyse the hegemonic relations between men and women

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### 9.2 OVERVIEW OF GENDER ROLES

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Many theorists have tried to define what social role is. Some of them, most notably Biddle and Thomas define social role in terms of a ‘person-behavior matrix’. A definition based on such a broad matrix is not useful in trying to analyse a particular

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social role. A more useful definition of social role would be to look at the set of relations essential for the social role to be carried forward. According to Lopata, 'A social person is that "package" of characteristics with which an individual enters a specific role'. These are presumed to be essential for the performance of the role-related duties and the receipt of role-related rights. A community or a society has the right to establish the criteria needed for a social person entering the role of a father, doctor, plumber, or any other group over which these groups have influence. An individual desiring to establish a social role must connect a group willing to collaborate to meet the agreed upon objective. A social circle comprises all individuals to whom a particular individual at the heart of a social role has duties and commitments and from whom the individual receives the rights needed to carry out the duties.

### **Family Role**

Changes that have been made in the economic structure of society have a bearing on present day roles within a family. In Western societies, industrialization and urbanization led to the splitting of labour into two spheres, i.e., public and private. Occupational roles became a part of the 'public sphere' and came to be identified with the masculine. The private sphere, on the other hand, was thought to come under the sphere of women, whose role changed from being a useful member of society integrated with the community to that of a wife, mother or homemaker within a household. With time, the 'masculine' sphere extended to all sorts of public institutions whether it was religious, economic or political. Sociologists have viewed this inequitable distribution of work as per the gendered expectations of their duties. Men are regarded as providers for the family since they are expected to be earning more than women and women are expected to attend to the family chores even if they are earning members of the family. These gender roles are inculcated among both men and women during early socialization itself, which in turn differentiate them as men and women.

### **Role of Wife**

In pre-industrial and early industrial societies, whether they were patriarchal or patrilineal, the duties of a wife entailed cooperation with not only her husband but also his community or village. The duties of the wife were determined by her husband's family who in turn granted her rights to make possible the performance of these responsibilities. These duties mainly encompassed taking care of the children of the household and the older generation of her husband's family. The status of a wife that lost her husband depended upon the status of widows in society. Usually, widows married the brother of the deceased husband as part of a levirate system.

As societies became more and more complex and expanded with time, the power of the patriarchal line over children decreased considerably. The youth could now attain an education and occupation away from their home, get married and even move far away from their ancestral home. As a result, the marital

obligations of a wife also changed. The husband now concentrated on bringing up his family of procreation and not his parents. A wife could now run her household without much interference from her husband's family. This had negative consequences for her in-law's who lived in expectation of support from the male children in their old age. At the same time, since the wife's duty of taking care of her husband's aged parents diminished, so did the support she received from her in-laws. Now, the primary responsibility of taking care of children and her husband fell on the wife.

### **The Role of a Mother**

Changes in economic institutions in modern society released the male from his familial obligations; first it was his family of orientation, that is, a family in which one is born and raised which includes one's parents and siblings, and then even his family of procreation, that is, a family formed when one establishes it through the institution of marriage which consists of husband, wife and children. He was expected to concentrate on his career fully, leaving the duty of bringing up children entirely to the mother. Although, in society a mother's role varies according to cultural mores, the role stresses that mothers are both biological parents and primary caregivers. These changes had repercussions on the institution of the family in modern Industrial society, especially on the role of the mother. The immediate social circle of the mother no longer included grandparents, aunts and uncles, and relatives by marriage. At the same time, her birth families contribution in her social role of a mother increased, especially her own mother's participation. Nowadays, maternal assistance by the mother of a young married woman is significant, in the relative absence of in-laws, and of frequent absence of fathers in daily life.

### **Public Role**

As you learned above, a women's participation in the public sphere, which was thought to be a 'masculine' sphere, unless it was related to her role of a wife or mother, was simply ignored. Unmarried women did gain employment, whether it was in agriculture, nursing, teaching, however, important occupations were out of bounds for women. Women also participated in public institutions like those having a religious or political significance, but it was always in a subsidiary role. You will learn more about women's work in the public sphere later on in the book, however, to state briefly, even today, women find it difficult to break out of their stereotyped role in the private sphere. In societies all over the world, men are thought to possess more capacity for rational thought and women are judged to be more emotional than men and escaping from it is difficult. Hence, we find more men participating in public roles than women. Although more and more women are taking up occupations and asserting themselves in the public sphere, there are still many professions that are still dominated by men. Moreover, women also face problems like harassment, violence and unequal pay in their professions.

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### 9.3 HEGEMONIC RELATIONS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

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#### NOTES

**Patriarchy** is a male-dominated social structure that leads to the oppression of women. We live within a patriarchy, a society largely controlled by men and in which men usually have a greater share of the rewards (both in terms of wealth and status) available. Even if men are uncomfortable with this and would like to change it, they still benefit from living within a male-dominated society. Patriarchy, by definition, exhibits androcentrism—male-centred norms prevalent on all social institutions that become the standard to which all persons adhere. Sexism is reinforced when patriarchy and androcentrism combine to perpetuate beliefs that gender roles are biologically determined and are therefore unalterable. For example, throughout the developing world beliefs about a woman’s biological unsuitability, except for domestic roles, have restricted opportunities for education and achieving literacy. These restrictions have made men the guardians of what has been written, disseminated and interpreted regarding gender and the placement of men and women in society. Until recently, history has been recorded from an androcentric perspective that ignored the other half of humanity. This perspective has perpetuated the belief that patriarchy is an inevitable, inescapable fact of history, so struggles for gender equality are doomed to fail. Education of women is associated with the power to engage in research and scholarship offering alternatives to prevailing androcentric views. We will see that such scholarship suggests patriarchal systems to perhaps be universal, but they are not inevitable and that gender egalitarianism was a historical fact of life in some cultures and is a contemporary fact of life in others.

The idea of patriarchy has been central to many feminist interpretations of gender inequality. However, as an analytical tool, it has also been criticized for failing to explain changes and diversity in gender inequality. We cannot think of a uniform and similar form of oppression with regard to all of history. Sylvia Walby believes that the concept of patriarchy is essential to any analysis of gender inequality.

In *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), Walby presents a way of understanding patriarchy that is more flexible than its predecessors. It allows room for change over historical time and for consideration of ethnic and class differences.

According to Walby, patriarchy is ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (1990:20). She views patriarchy and capitalism as distinct systems which interact in different ways—sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in tension—depending on historical conditions. She argues that capitalism has generally benefited from patriarchy through the sexual division of labour. But at other times, capitalism and patriarchy have been at odds with one another. For example, in war times, when women entered the labour market in great numbers, the interests of capitalism and patriarchy were not aligned.

Walby identifies six structures through which patriarchy operates. She recognizes that a weakness of early feminist theory was focus on one ‘essential’ cause of women’s oppression, such as male violence or women’s role in reproduction. Since Walby is concerned with the depth and interconnectivity of gender inequality, she sees patriarchy as composed of six structures that are independent but interact with one another.

- Production relations in the household—Women’s unpaid domestic labour, such as house work and child care, is expropriated by her husband.
- Paid work—Women in the labour market are excluded from certain types of work, receive lower pay and are segregated in less skilled jobs.
- The patriarchal state—In its policies and priorities, the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests.
- Male violence—Although male violence is often seen as composed of individualistic acts, it is patterned and systematic. Women routinely experience this violence and are affected by it in standard ways. The state effectively condones the violence with its refusal to intervene, except in exceptional cases.
- Patriarchal relations in sexuality—This is manifested in ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ and in the sexual double standard between men and women (in which different rules for sexual behaviour apply).
- Patriarchal cultural institutions—A variety of institutions and practices—including media, religion and education—produce representations of women ‘within a patriarchal gaze’. These representations influence women’s identities and prescribe acceptable standards of behaviour and actions.

Walby distinguishes two distinct forms of patriarchy—

1. Private Patriarchy and
2. Public Patriarchy.

**1. Private Patriarchy** is domination of women which occurs within the household at the hands of an individual patriarch. It is an exclusionary strategy, because women are essentially prevented from taking part in public life. Western worlds before the late twentieth century were ones in which women’s everyday lives were focused around family life, and their fathers and/or husbands had a lot of control over them. Sylvia Walby (1990, 1997) has called this private patriarchy.

**2.** On the other hand, public patriarchy is more collective in form. Women are involved in public realms, such as politics and the labour market, but remain segregated from wealth, power and status. That was a system in which women were often financially dependent on

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men in their family, some not working at all or having to give up their work. In many of the better jobs, such as teaching, there were bans until the 1960s or 1970s against married women working. Those who did work typically earned poor wages and therefore were still reliant on having men to support them, especially for at least some period if they had children. Gradually, after the Second World War, all this began to change as more and more women started to go out to work and get more access to better jobs. Many women have achieved financial independence, and there have been changes that make divorce easier and provide some welfare to support lone mothers. This means that it is possible for women to live without having a man to support them. However, Walby (1990, 1997) argues that this does not mean that patriarchy disappears, but rather changes in form.

Walby contends that at least in Britain, there has been a shift in patriarchy—both in degree and in form—from the Victorian era to the present day. She notes that the narrowing of the wage gap and the gains in women’s education demonstrate a shift in the degree of patriarchy, but do not signal its defeat. If at one time women’s oppression was found chiefly in the home, it is now located throughout society as a whole—women are now segregated and subordinated in all areas of the public realm. In other words, patriarchy has shifted in form from private to public. As Walby quips: liberated from the home, women now have the whole of society in which to be exploited (1990).

According to Walby (1990, 1997), gender relations now take the form of public patriarchy. Rather than women’s everyday lives being under the control of individual men within their families, decisions affecting their lives are usually made by groups of men in the public world. Politicians, heads of big corporations, judges and other powerful groups are still overwhelmingly male. For example, in 2007, 417 of America’s top 500 companies each had fewer than three women directors (Catalyst, 2007).

Public patriarchy is now the dominant form within Western society, but private forms of patriarchy continue to exist. Older women who began their lives under the domestic system of patriarchy do not have the education, skills, and work experience to find work that could make them independent, should they desire. Young women’s lives are more likely to be affected by public patriarchy. This is because younger women are more likely to have an education and to get jobs that allow a degree of independence from individual men. This may change as they become older and start families, though this depends on whether and how they continue to work. Both types of patriarchy impact differently on different women depending on their class, age, position in the life course (for example, before or after having children) and ethnicity (Walby, 1997).

It is possible to extend Walby’s analysis globally, in which case developing nations are likely to be characterized as ones in which women continue to be

controlled via families. Yet this shows that there are limitations to her approach, because she tends to represent progress for women as a shift away from the constraints of private life.

Much common-sense thinking tends to portray 'private' life as an area where women have considerable status and control.

Although sociologists might want to question the accuracy of common-sense ideas such as this (see below), they may want to recognize that women are not simply doormats. Walby is trying to think about how women have gained greater control over their own lives, but she focuses on how this has happened by them entering more into public life. Her vision of private life remains one of traditional male-breadwinner families. Others (Beck and

Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) agree that individualization processes have given women more freedom to live for themselves, rather than their families, but that this changes the character of private life as well. The private does not remain an unreconstructed realm in which women are inevitably under the thumb of men. Private life and families are also altered, and women have been active in bringing about these alterations by insisting that the personal is political.

The slogan 'the personal is political' exposed the artificiality of public/private distinctions. It highlighted that the work done in the public world relied upon women's toil at home. The phrase was a demand to take notice of many of the issues crucial to most women's everyday lives but largely ignored by politicians and policymakers. It was a slogan that emerged from the second-wave feminist movement that was part of broad social revolutions in the 1960s and 1970s. Feminists began to examine all the aspects of women's experiences typically excluded from formal decision making. Sex, sexuality, and violence were debated in political terms, as were other everyday issues such as the way people dressed and ate. Fundamentally, feminists examined intimate relationships between women and men as relationships of power.

### **Different Perspectives on Gender Relations**

The man who coined the term 'sociology', nineteenth-century French philosopher Auguste Comte, was specifically interested not just in understanding everyday social life in the present, but also in using that understanding to create a better future. Comte's views on women varied during his life, but he basically thought that women and men are different by nature, and imagined a future in which women would be 'freed' from having to struggle to meet their material needs and able to focus on their 'proper' role of caring for others. He wished to see them without responsibilities in the public sphere of work and political decision making. However, his contemporary, the English sociologist Harriet Martineau, had different views (Hoecker-Drysdale, 2003). Martineau was a remarkable woman and her translation of Comte, along with her other copious publications, was crucial in helping bring sociology to Britain and the rest of the English speaking world. However, she

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differed from him substantially in how she saw differences between the sexes. Comte believed that men within social elites should rule in the social order of the future.

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Martineau wanted women to have the opportunity to fully participate in society. Her views on women are recognizably sociological in that she saw social constraints such as lack of education, lack of financial independence and lack of political power as what made women's lives different from that of men. For instance, in her detailed study of the newly formed democracy of America, she was highly critical of women's lack of political status and hoped they would soon have a vote (Martineau, 1837). Social constraints were things that could be changed and she did agree with Comte in believing that social scientific methods could and should be used to gain knowledge that would be the basis of constructing a better society (Hoecker-Drysdale, 2003).

The key founding fathers of sociology, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, all tended to characterize relations between women and men as natural, not constructed. Indeed, as Sydie (1987) has argued, these early sociologists generally accepted the thinking of the time in which women's lower social position was explained as resulting from their closer association to nature. Women's reproductive capacities supposedly rendered them unable to engage in the rational thought and action deemed necessary for active participation in the public sphere. Therefore, they had to be dependent on men, and men's control over them was typically thought justified.

This assumes that the public world of paid work and political decision making is what constitutes culture. As feminists have long suggested, this devalues the importance of women's unpaid caring work within the family and its contribution to the stability and continuance of the social world. Marx, Weber and Durkheim (and Comte) did at least think a little about women's place at home and its social importance.

Weber saw men as 'naturally' the physical and intellectual superiors of women (Sydie, 1987). However, his analysis of patriarchal power is important in making sense of women's social status. Weber clearly sets out the operation of patriarchy as a traditional form of power in which elder males within families exercise control over younger males and over women (Sydie, 1987). His characterization of that form of power sees it as fundamentally working within households, whereas outside the household an individual patriarch's power is limited by having to negotiate with other men. This does not contribute to really understanding the power relations between men and women (Sydie, 1987). Feminists have developed the notion of patriarchy to refer not to the rule of older males, but to a society in which men have the power to dominate women (Walby, 1990). Other ideas of Weber's can perhaps give some insight into how women have managed to gain some power, although it is uncertain as to whether this will progress in the future. Weber (1968/1921, 1981/1927) is famous for his arguments that society has been subject to a process of rationalization that has seen calculation and rules dominate social organization. The world becomes 'disenchanted' as modern ideas emphasize the

importance of using science and reason to understand it, instead of superstition and religion. We can take from this that it becomes more difficult to justify men's power over women in traditional terms or in terms of it being God's will. However, not only ideas but the way society is organized would need to change in order to ease or erase gender inequalities.

Durkheim (1893), in his work on *The Division of Labour in Society*, argues that as society became more specialized and the division of labour more complex, the 'natural' differences between women and men would increase. He did not view this as negative, but as something that would contribute to the smooth functioning of society. As a functionalist, Durkheim saw the various parts of social life as each having a function or purpose in maintaining the social order. Women, he noted, had increasingly retired to the private world of family life to specialize as carers, and this he thought a proper and sensible reflection of their 'natural' abilities.

If women did become more active within society, he thought they would take on different roles to men, ones to which they were supposedly fitted by nature (Sydie, 1987). With a slight variation, this view was taken up and expanded by other functionalists such as Parsons (Parsons and Bales, 1956), have certainly suggested that the different 'jobs' women and men usually do help keep society running smoothly. He argues that while the men fulfil the instrumental role of going out and being goal orientated and competitive, women can stay at home and focus on the expressive role of caring for their families. He argued that complex modern society required people to specialize in either the 'expressive' skills required to socialize children or the 'instrumental' (goal orientated) skills required in the competitive public world of work. Parsons thought that it was socialization rather than 'nature' that fitted women for the expressive and men for the instrumental roles (Connell, 2002), but he did not imagine the possibility that men could be socialized to be more expressive and women to be instrumental. In this, like Durkheim, he affirmed gender inequalities instead of critically challenging them.

#### **Check Your Progress**

1. What was the role of wife in pre-industrial society?
2. Name the key founding fathers of sociology.
3. State one difference between the views of Auguste Comte and Harriet Martineau on the position of women in society.

### **9.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS**

1. In pre-industrial and early industrial societies, whether they were patriarchal or patrilineal, the duties of a wife entailed cooperation with not only her husband but also his community or village. The duties of the wife were determined by her husband's family who in turn granted her rights to make

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possible the performance of these responsibilities. These duties mainly encompassed taking care of the children of the household and the older generation of her husband's family.

2. The key founding fathers of sociology are Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim.
3. Harriet Martineau wanted women to have the opportunity to fully participate in society. Auguste Comte wished to see women without responsibilities in the public sphere of work and political decision making.

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## 9.5 SUMMARY

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- According to Lopata, 'A social person is that "package" of characteristics with which an individual enters a specific role'.
- A social circle comprises all individuals to whom a particular individual at the heart of a social role has duties and commitments and from whom the individual receives the rights needed to carry out the duties.
- In Western societies, industrialization and urbanization led to the splitting of labour into two spheres, i.e., public and private.
- Men are regarded as providers for the family since they are expected to be earning more than women and women are expected to attend to the family chores even if they are earning members of the family.
- In pre-industrial and early industrial societies, whether they were patriarchal or patrilineal, the duties of a wife entailed cooperation with not only her husband but also his community or village.
- Changes in economic institutions in modern society released the male from his familial obligations; first it was his family of orientation, that is, a family in which one is born and raised which includes one's parents and siblings, and then even his family of procreation, that is, a family formed when one establishes it through the institution of marriage which consists of husband, wife and children.
- Women also participated in public institutions like those having a religious or political significance, but it was always in a subsidiary role.
- Patriarchy is a male-dominated social structure that leads to the oppression of women.
- The idea of patriarchy has been central to many feminist interpretations of gender inequality. However, as an analytical tool, it has also been criticized for failing to explain changes and diversity in gender inequality.
- Walby identifies six structures through which patriarchy operates. She recognizes that a weakness of early feminist theory was focus on one 'essential' cause of women's oppression, such as male violence or women's role in reproduction.

- According to Walby (1990, 1997), gender relations now take the form of public patriarchy. Rather than women's everyday lives being under the control of individual men within their families, decisions affecting their lives are usually made by groups of men in the public world.
- Sex, sexuality, and violence were debated in political terms, as were other everyday issues such as the way people dressed and ate. Fundamentally, feminists examined intimate relationships between women and men as relationships of power.
- Martineau wanted women to have the opportunity to fully participate in society. Her views on women are recognizably sociological in that she saw social constraints such as lack of education, lack of financial independence and lack of political power as what made women's lives different from that of men.
- The key founding fathers of sociology, Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, all tended to characterize relations between women and men as natural, not constructed.
- Durkheim (1893), in his work on *The Division of Labour in Society*, argues that as society became more specialized and the division of labour more complex, the 'natural' differences between women and men would increase.

## NOTES

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### 9.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Socialization:** It is a continuing process where by an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behaviour, and social skills appropriate to his or her social position.
- **Patriarchy:** It is a male dominated social structure that leads to the oppression of women.
- **Private patriarchy:** It is the domination of women which occurs within the household at the hands of an individual patriarch.

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### 9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write short notes on the following:
  - (a) Private patriarchy and
  - (b) Public patriarchy.
2. What is androcentrism?
3. Comment on the role of women in the contemporary scenario.

**NOTES**

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Discuss some of the different social roles that have been constructed for women.
2. 'The idea of patriarchy has been central to many feminist interpretations of gender inequality.' Critically comment on the statement.
3. Examine the different perspectives on gender relations.

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**9.8 FURTHER READINGS**

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**BLOCK - III**  
**TRIBAL COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS AND**  
**FEATURES**

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## UNIT 10 TRIBAL COMMUNITY

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**Structure**

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Objectives
- 10.2 Classification, Geographical Distribution and Features of Tribal Communities
  - 10.2.1 Tribe and Caste
  - 10.2.2 Classification of Tribes in India
  - 10.2.3 Changing Nature of Indian Tribal Society
  - 10.2.4 Impact of Urbanization and Industrialization
  - 10.2.5 Characteristics of Indian Tribal Society
- 10.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 10.4 Summary
- 10.5 Key Words
- 10.6 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 10.7 Further Readings

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### 10.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you will study about the classification, geographical distribution and features of the tribal communities in India.

The term 'tribe' has been defined in various ways by different scholars. The origin of the term tribe lies in the Latin word *tribus*, which referred to the three divisions into which the early Romans were divided. For the Romans, tribe was a political division. On the other hand, for the Greeks, it meant their geographical divisions.

The closest Indian term equivalent to tribe is *Jana*. There were *janas* or communities of people like the *Savars*, the *Kellas*, the *Bhillas* and the *Khasas* whom we know today as tribes. With the passage of time, each of these communities lent its name to the territory inhabited by it. These territories came to be known as 'Janapadas'. Thus, the *janas* or the tribal are the autochthonous people of the land.



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## 10.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Explain the classification of tribes
- Discuss the geographical distribution of tribes
- Identify the features of the tribal population

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## 10.2 CLASSIFICATION, GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND FEATURES OF TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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At present, according to Western scholars, the term tribe means an ethnic group that is geographically isolated and identified with one particular territory. Further, the group has distinct social, economic and cultural traditions and practices. Indian sociologist, R.C. Verma defines tribe as an ethnic group that connotes a combination of racial, territorial and cultural characteristics. The members of a tribal group have a common ethnicity.

A tribe has been conceived by Kroeber as a small, isolated and close-knit society. In tribal societies, both societal and cultural aspects are largely organized on the basis of kinship. Both actual and fictitious kinship have a great impact in regulating person to person relations and in controlling an individual's behaviour. Although strong group integration exists, political institutions are weakly developed in tribal societies. Their political organization is broadly based on the principle of primitive democracy, which is characterized by a maximum of equality co-existing with a minimum of authority or control. Thus, Kroeber in his definition has given due emphasis on the social as well as cultural unity of a tribe.

In his definition, Hoebel states that a tribe possesses a distinctive culture that marks it off from other tribes. According to the Oxford Dictionary, a tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding them as having a common ancestor.

I.M. Lewis is of the opinion that ideally tribal societies are small in scale. They are restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations. They possess a morality, a religion and world view of corresponding dimensions. Characteristically too, tribal languages are unwritten and hence, the extent of communication in both time and space is inevitably narrow. At the same time, tribal societies exhibit a remarkable economy of design and have a compactness and self sufficiency lacking in modern society.

The Republic of India aims to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. It denies giving any official recognition to the traditional system of stratification of various castes and tribes into numerous sub-divisions. The Constitution of India has, therefore, defined the Scheduled Tribes as such tribes

or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of the Constitution.

A tribal society can be defined as the common living space of the different tribal communities residing in a defined and demarcated territory. The members of these societies lead their lives in accordance with their societal norms, practices and beliefs. Thus, the Indian tribal society would comprise all the tribal communities living within the territory of India and practicing their indigenous and unique way of living.

## NOTES

### 10.2.1 Tribe and Caste

In India, tribe and caste are two important aspects of social organization. These two have many attributes in common. This similarity has led many scholars to identify these two as synonymous. As a result, many tribes have been described as castes and vice versa. After a period of prolonged controversy, it was finally recorded in the Imperial Gazetteer of India that a tribe consists of the following:

- Collection of families bearing a common name
- Speaking a common dialect
- Occupying or professing to occupy a common territory

The definition of caste gives an almost similar picture. A caste is also a collection of families bearing a common name, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and very often speaking the same dialect, though it is always endogamous.

While distinguishing a tribe from a caste in India, Bailey writes that an ideal tribe has always an organic unity, which is characterized by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system. On the other hand, an ideal caste encourages interactions and always hankers after a position in the hierarchical system.

As regards tribe-caste differences, Sujit Sinha, author of *Anthropology in India*, has made a number of valuable observations. He holds that a tribe is isolated from other ethnic groups in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social relations. This isolation generates a strong in-group sentiment. Internally, a tribe is characterized by homogeneity as there is always a lack of social stratification and role specialization other than by age, sex and kinship. On the contrary, a caste is a typically connected, stratified and heterogeneous group. Further, a caste is characterized by multi-ethnic residence in the local community, inter-ethnic participation in an economy involving occupational specialization by ethnic groups.

### 10.2.2 Classification of Tribes in India

Though tribal populations are found across the world, the largest concentration of tribal population is found in India. The tribes are the autochthonous people of the Indian peninsula and are believed to be the earliest settlers here. The tribal population in India, in absolute terms, is the highest in the world at 8.43 crore (provisional

figures as given by the 2011 census). Tribal constitute about 8.6 per cent of India's total population and an overwhelming majority of them (about 92 per cent) reside in rural areas.

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### **Classification on the basis of religion**

The bulk of the tribal population regard themselves as Hindus. The influence of Hindu religion on the tribes is tremendous and almost 90 per cent of the tribal follow it in one form or the other. A significant number have embraced Christianity also. Buddhism, Jainism and Islam are also followed by a negligible proportion of the tribal population in India.

One important point to be noted in this context is that even those tribes that have embraced any of the above-mentioned religions, have not necessarily shed their local tribal beliefs and rituals. They continue to practice their traditional faith even while following their acquired faith.

When you view this phenomenon from the geographical perspective, it is seen that most of the tribes of Southern India, Western India and Central India have adopted Hinduism as their new religion. The tribes of North-Eastern India, especially those residing in Nagaland and Mizoram, have adopted Christianity in a big way. In Central India, some major tribes of Chota Nagpur also follow Christianity. The tribes following Islam are few in number and are scattered all across the country. Buddhism among Indian tribes is represented mainly by some tribal groups of Arunachal Pradesh. The impact of Buddhism can also be seen in the Himalayan and Maharashtra tribes.

### **Classification on the basis of location**

Considering the wide spread distribution of the tribes all across the country, it is necessary to group them in broad geographical regions. L.P. Vidyarthi (ICSSR, Survey of Research in Sociology and Anthropology, Volume 3) divided the tribal people into the following four major zones:

1. The Himalayan Region, comprising Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh (Bhot, Gujjar and Gaddi), Terai area of Uttar Pradesh (Tharus), Assam (Mizo, Garo, Khasi), Meghalaya, Nagaland (Nagas), Manipur (Mao) and Tripura (Tripuri) and having 11 per cent of the total tribal population of the country.
2. Middle India, comprising West Bengal, Bihar (Santhal, Munda, Oraon and Ho), Orissa (Khond and Gond) and having about 57 per cent of the Indian tribal population.
3. Western India, comprising Rajasthan (Bhil, Meena, Garasia), Madhya Pradesh (Bhil), Gujarat (Bhil, Dubla, Dhodia) and Maharashtra (Bhil, Koli, Mahadeo, Kokana) containing about 25 per cent of the Indian tribal population.
4. Southern India, comprising Andhra Pradesh (Gond, Koya, Konda, Dova), Karnataka (Naikada, Marati), Tamil Nadu (Irula, Toda), Kerala (Pulayan,

Paniyan) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Andamanese, Nicobari) and containing about 7 per cent of the total tribal population.

*Tribal Community*

### **Racial classification**

L.P. Vidyarthi observes that the most acceptable racial classification of the Indian population is the one done by Guha in 1935. The latter had identified the following six main races with nine sub-types:

1. The Negrito
2. The Proto-Austroloid
3. The Mongoloid
  - (i) Paleo Mongoloid
    - (a) Long-headed
    - (b) Broad-headed
  - (ii) Tibeto Mongoloid
4. The Mediterranean
  - (i) Paleo-mediterranean
  - (ii) Mediterranean
  - (iii) Oriental type
5. The Western Brachycephals
  - (i) Alpinoid
  - (ii) Dinaric
  - (iii) Armenoid
6. The Nordic

Against this backdrop of the overall racial composition of the people of India, Guha has classified the Indian tribal population into three major racial categories:

1. **The Proto-Austroloid:** This group is characterized by dark skin colour, sunken nose and lower forehead. The Munda (Chota Nagpur), the Oraon (Central India), the Ho (Bihar), the Gond (Madhya Pradesh) and the Khond (Orissa) tribes belong to this racial strain.
2. **The Mongoloid:** This group is characterized by light skin colour, broad head and face, low nose bridge and slanting eyes with a fold on the upper eye lid. These features are found amongst the Bhutiya (Central Himalayas), the Wanchu (Arunachal Pradesh), the Naga (Nagaland) and the Khasi (meghalaya) tribes.
3. **The Negrito:** They are characterized by dark skin, wooly hair and broad lips. The Kadar (Kerala), the Onge (Little Andaman) and the Jarwa (Andaman Island) tribes have these features.

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It is to be clarified that classification of the tribal or any population by racial type only means pre-dominance of certain hereditary physical traits among the concerned population. The same traits can be found in different degrees among other populations also. There is no pure race anywhere anymore and there is no correlation between racial strain and mental faculties.

Biraja Sankar Guha's (Director of Social Education Training Centre in Ranchi) classification of the Indian tribes in terms of race is not free from controversy. He questions the existence of the Negrito strain in India as a hereditary racial trait. He considers that mutation has played its role in the prevalence of Negrito features among some tribal population. There are also missing links in Guha's classification. The pastoral Todas of Nilgiri hills in the South are predominantly of Nordic type. Besides, the presence of Mediterranean features among the Indian tribes has been underplayed by Guha. Taking an overall view, it can be said that the population included in the list of Scheduled Tribes share in different proportion the same racial traits as the rest of the population of the country.

### Linguistic classification

The linguistic classification of Indian tribes is very complex. According to a recent estimate, the tribal people speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages. Since, languages are highly structured and reflect the social structure and values of a society, this linguistic diversity indicates the great variety found among the Indian tribes. However, for the purpose of clarity and understanding, the languages have been classified into following four major families:

- **Austro-Asiatic family:** There are two branches of this family, namely, Mon-Khmer branch and Munda branch. Languages of the first branch are spoken by Khasi and Nicobari tribes. Languages of the Munda branch are spoken by the Santhali, Gondi and Kharia tribes.
- **Tibeto-Chinese family:** There are two sub-families of this type, namely, Siamese-Chinese sub-family and Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In the North-Eastern frontier of India, Khamti is one specimen of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family is further sub-divided into several branches. Tribal people of Nagaland and Lepcha of Darjeeling speak variants of Tibeto-Burman languages.
- **Indo-European family:** Tribal languages such as Hajong and Bhili are included in this group.
- **Dravidian family:** Languages of this family are spoken by Yeruva of Mysore and Oraon of Chota Nagpur.

This broad classification does not necessarily mean that there is a high degree of understanding of languages among the speakers of different languages within the same language family. For example, the Nagas are divided in about fifty different language groups and quite often the speaker of one language variant does not understand the language spoken by another group.

## Economic classification

Various social scientists have classified tribal populations on the basis of their economic activity. Indian tribes have also been thus classified. The classical classification of Adam Smith and the more recent classification of Thurnwald and Herskovits have been applied throughout the world in classifying tribes on the basis of their economic life. Though Indian scholars like Majumdar have also classified the tribal people of India on this basis; it is the scheme presented by Thurnwald that is taken as most acceptable. His classification is as follows:

- **Homogeneous communities of men as hunters and trappers, women as collectors:** The Kadar, the Chenchu, the Kharia and the Korwa are some of the tribes that fall under this economic activity.
- **Homogeneous communities of hunters, trappers and agriculturists:** The Kamar, the Baiga and the Birhor tribes fall under this category.
- **Graded societies of hunters, trappers, agriculturists and artisans:** Most of the Indian tribes fall under this category. The Chero and the Agariya, amongst so many others are famous artisans.
- **The herdsmen:** The Toda and some sections of the great Bhil tribe are the best examples of this category.
- **Homogeneous hunters and herdsmen:** This category is not represented among Indian tribes.
- **Ethnically stratified cattle breeders and traders:** The Bhotiyas of the sub-Himalayan region breed yaks and are also traders.
- **Socially graded herdsmen** with hunting, agriculture and artisan population.

Thurnwald's classification has been criticized by Majumdar on the ground that though it is useful, it does not indicate the nature of economic difficulties experienced by the tribal communities.

Nadeem Hasnain has classified the Indian tribes on the basis of the conditions of their economic life in the following categories:

- **Tribes hunting in forests:** This class of tribes is mainly found in southern India. The Chenchu and the Chandi of Andhra Pradesh, Kadar, Malapatram and Kurumba of Kerala, Paliyan of Tamil Nadu, and Onge, Jarawa, Sentenelese and Nicobarese of Andaman and Nicobar islands are some of these tribes.
- **Tribes engaged in hilly cultivation (shifting or slash and burn cultivation):** Almost all the tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura and some tribes of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh produce their crops through this mode of cultivation.
- **Tribes engaged in cultivation on levelled (plain) land:** The Oraon, Munda, Ho and Santhal tribes have taken to settled agriculture on plain land as means of their livelihood.

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- **Simple artisan tribes:** Some Indian tribes earn their livelihood through basket-making, rope-making, weaving, iron smelting, woodwork etc. The main examples are the Gujar of Kashmir, the Kinnauri of Himachal Pradesh, Asur of Bihar, Munda of Orissa, Agariya of Madhya Pradesh and Irula of Tamil Nadu.
- **Pastoral tribes:** These tribes earn their living by selling milk of cattle reared by them or by trading the cattle itself. The Toda of Nilgiri hills, Gaddi and Bakriwal of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir, Nageshia of Madhya Pradesh, Maldhan of Gujarat and some other tribes of Northern and Southern India are notable examples.
- **Tribes living as folk artists:** Some tribal groups are very good exponents of art forms and earn their livelihood by performing the same. The Mundupptu of Orissa are expert acrobats, the Kota of Tamil Nadu are snake charmers and the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh are dancers.
- **Agricultural and non-agricultural labour oriented tribes:** Among the tribes engaged in agricultural labour are those which are traditionally agriculturists but work as farm labourers on others' lands owing to their landlessness. Non-agricultural tribal labour force includes those tribes who are working in local factories and mines.
- **Tribes engaged in service and trade:** A small proportion of the tribal communities are engaged in Government and semi-Government jobs, mainly due to the Constitutional provisions of reservations for Scheduled Tribes. The tribes of North-Eastern India and the Meena tribe of Rajasthan have been the major beneficiaries of this policy.

### Classification on the basis of culture

Indian tribes are also classified according to their cultural distance from the rural–urban groups. Scholars believe that the indigenous tribes of India lose their originality, individuality and distinct identity on account of the cultural influence from non-tribals. This intermingling of tribal people with non-tribal is known as culture contact.

Majumdar (1976) opines that classification of Indian tribes in accordance with the degree and influence of culture contact is very useful in formulating rehabilitation plans for the tribal as it focuses upon the problems of tribal India. He believes that these problems arise due to the tribal people's contact with, or isolation from, the rural–urban groups. According to him, the tribal cultures fall into the following groups:

- Tribes that are culturally most distant from the rural–urban groups and, hence, more or less out of contact.
- Tribes that are under the influence of the culture of rural–urban groups and have developed discomforts and problems consequently.

- Tribes that are in contact with rural–urban groups but have not suffered due to such contact or have turned the corner and do not suffer any more because they have now got acculturated into rural or urban culture.

Majumdar never agreed with the view of Verrier Elwin that every contact with the civilized world brings misery to the tribal people. Rather, he believed that all the three types of tribal communities mentioned above should be encouraged to establish healthy and creative contacts with the rural–urban groups.

The Indian Conference of Social Work (1952) appointed a Tribal Welfare Committee that suggested the following classification of the Indian tribes on the basis of their culture contact:

- Tribal communities
- Semi-tribal communities
- Acculturated tribal communities
- Totally assimilated tribes

### 10.2.3 Changing Nature of Indian Tribal Society

The traditional and inwards looking tribal society of India has been gradually changing and adapting to modern ways of living. Post-independence, the Government of India took it upon itself to vigorously pursue tribal development programs to improve a lot of the tribal populations. Provisions were made in the Indian Constitution to safeguard the interests of the tribal people and promote welfare activities amongst these communities.

#### Impact of constitutional provisions and developmental initiatives

The constitutional provisions to safeguard the interests of the tribal people can be divided into following categories:

- Protection
- Development

The protective provisions are meant to provide them protection from social and economic exploitation and injustice. The developmental provisions are meant to provide them with positive steps for their socio-economic development.

The following are the important protective provisions:

- **Article 15(4)-Promotion of social, economic and educational interest:** While Article 15 prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, etc., clause (4) of the Article empowers the State to make special provisions. These provisions are made for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This clause was specifically inserted to protect any special provision for the backward classes from being challenged in courts of law on the ground of being discriminatory.

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- **Article 16(4)-Reservation in posts and services:** While Article 15(4) enables the State to offer protective discrimination to the backward classes in all spheres, Article 16(4) specially provides for protective discrimination in the matter of employment in the services under the State.
- **Article 19(5)-Safeguard of tribal interest in property:** While every citizen of India is guaranteed the right of free movement and residence throughout the country and the right of acquisition and disposition of property, special restrictions might be imposed by the State for protection of the interests of the Scheduled Tribes in their property.
- **Article 23-**Prohibits human trafficking and forced labour.
- **Article 29-**Cultural and educational rights: This article provides protection to Scheduled Tribes to preserve their language, dialects and cultures.
- **Article 46-Provides for promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes:** This article is a directive principle and does not confer any justifiable right. However, with the enactment and adoption of the Right to Education Act, this situation has undergone change and right to education is now a fundamental right for every child in India in the age group of 6–14 years.
- **Article 164-**Provides for a Minister in charge of tribal welfare in the States of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, as they have high levels of tribal population. With the creation of the new states of Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh, the Constitution was amended in 2006 to provide for a tribal welfare minister in these two states while removing the same provision in case of Bihar.
- **Article 320(4)-**Provides that the Union or State Public Service Commissions need not be consulted about the manner in which reservations in employment under Article 16(4) is to be provided.
- **Article 330-**Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha.
- **Article 332-**Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the legislative assembly of every state.
- **Article 338-**Provides for the appointment of a special officer for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It shall be his duty to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided to these communities under the Constitution and report to the President.
- **Article 339(1)-**Appointment of a commission to report on the administration of Scheduled areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the states.

The following are the developmental provisions:

- **Article 275(1):** The first provision of Article 275(1) is that grants-in-aid shall be given by the State for meeting the cost of developmental schemes

meant for the Scheduled tribes. The grant is to be made for such specific schemes as are necessary for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and are undertaken with the approval of the Union Government.

- **Article 339(2):** It empowers the Union Government to issue directives to a state for the planning and execution of schemes that are considered essential for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that state.

In view of these constitutional provisions, the Union and State Governments have taken various steps to improve the socio-economic conditions of the tribes of India.

In 1960, the Scheduled Tribe Commission was set up by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar to work for the advancement of the tribal people. In 1980, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was devised. This strategy had two objectives. Firstly, it aimed to achieve socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes and, secondly, it had to protect the tribal people from exploitation. The funds for the TSPs are provided by both the Union and State Governments. However, the TSP has not been able to achieve the desired results due to administrative mismanagement and lack of vision.

The combined effect of the constitutional provisions and developmental programs on Indian tribal society has been positive, yet minimal. While literacy rate and employment opportunities have shown an upwards movement, the pace of such movement has been very slow. One reason could be the conscious decision of not to impose external economic, educational and cultural systems and values. The idea was to slowly bring in the tribal population into the arena of modern developmental tools. Thus, Indian tribal society has gradually accepted modern educational and economic models by accessing formal education in schools, colleges and universities and taking up salaried jobs in the service sector (both in government and private organizations). This is an important aspect of the changing nature of the Indian tribal society as education and employment have altered the world view of our tribal population.

#### **10.2.4 Impact of Urbanization and Industrialization**

The tribal areas have undergone the influence of urbanization and industrialization, which can be considered as important processes of change. Urbanization refers to the development of towns and cities and an urbanized way of life. Usually, industrialization leads to urbanization by creating urban areas around new industries. For example, towns like Rourkela in Orissa and Bhilai in Madhya Pradesh sprang up due to the setting up of the Rourkela Steel Plant and Bhilai Steel Plant, respectively. Similarly, the towns of Gurgaon and Noida came up near Delhi on account of the massive growth in the information technology industry. However, urbanization also occurs even without industrialization.

Industrialization as a process of change is related to the establishment of industries for the production of goods and services. Since, human beings work at industrial sites, industrial societies and industrial way of life comes into existence.

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The tribal areas in India have been influenced due to the setting up of industries and the growth of urban townships and way of life.

Urbanization and industrialization processes have affected the Indian tribes both positively and negatively. They have positively affected the tribal social system by freeing the members of a tribe from the bondage of kin groups like joint family, lineage and clan. They have become independent from these social chains. Lineage has given way to the concept of neighbour whereas; joint family system has yielded space to the nuclear family system. Decision-making has become independent and family and clan influence has weakened. This allows a tribal individual to take control of his life without getting dictated by the outdated principles and ideas.

Further, the institution of marriage in the tribal society has also been affected. Education is playing a significant role in finalizing marriages and in the choice of marriage partners. The age of marriage for both boys and girls has increased. Tribal endogamy has given way to inter-tribal marriages.

Urbanization and industrialization have exposed the young tribal people to modern culture and art forms. They have learnt these new cultural traits even while keeping faith in their traditional culture.

The tribal economy has also undergone changes. The concept of traditional, agricultural and barter economy has given way to industrial and market economy. The concepts of monthly salary, profit and savings have been introduced in their society. Traditional agriculture has been replaced by cultivation of cash crops as these crops yield higher profits on being sold in the urban markets.

Religious beliefs of the Indian tribes have also been impacted. They have been influenced by both Hinduism and Christianity. Previously, they believed that evil spirits caused diseases and they performed magic and witchcraft to get rid of those evil spirits. However, with a change in their religious beliefs and with the growing educational levels, the Indian tribes have adopted a different attitude towards diseases and the modern methods of treatment.

Urbanization and industrialization have also changed the political systems prevalent in traditional tribal society. Political institutions like the village councils and tribal chiefs have been gradually replaced/supplemented by new institutions like the modern Gram Panchayats, Police stations, Courts, Zilla Parishads, etc. Tribal women have become aware of their political powers and rights due to the system of reservation of seats in Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads.

The other positive impacts have been on various aspects of their lives. For example, thatched houses have slowly got replaced with *pucca* houses; traditional recreational activities/games like hide and seek, kabaddi, bow and arrow, etc. have been supplemented with modern games like cricket, hockey, volleyball, etc. Electricity has brought in television and video into their lives. This has contributed towards their entertainment and awareness. Means of communication and dressing patterns have also undergone positive changes.

However, the impact of industrialization and urbanization has also become negative. Traditional culture and beliefs have been destroyed to a large extent. Culture contact with rural–urban groups has resulted in detribalization of these unique people. Their customs, languages, social systems have been adversely affected. Indigenous knowledge of the tribal people is slowly getting lost. Family values and marital systems have been adversely affected. Nuclear families have damaged the cohesive living of family members earlier. The system of dowry and expensive gifts has taken the place of the bride price of earlier times. This has resulted in harassment and mental torture of the brides leading to suicides and separation.

The Bathudi tribe has been greatly influenced by culture contact with the nearby Hindu population and has adopted a significant part of the non-tribal Hindu life. The Bathudis follow Hindu religion, access modern education, visit health centers for treatment, pursue a few trading activities, save money, vote in elections, etc. They are still proud of their past and have preserved their culture and beliefs but have given up blindly following outdated views on religion, rituals, etc.

The Munda tribe is similar to the Bathudi tribe; though they have not adapted the Hindu way of life to the same degree.

The most inspiring practice of the Munda tribe is the relative independence of their women folk. Unlike, non-tribal rural societies, where women face a lot of discrimination, women of this tribe earn their livelihood and retain the money with them. Many of them use the money to run the household economy without any resistance from their husbands. They have the freedom to visit their parents' villages and seek medical care from modern health practitioners. Though the literacy level among these women is not very impressive, but the level of autonomy that they enjoy in their families and society is noteworthy.

So, it can be safely concluded that tribal communities can progress on the path of development and modernity without having to bear the negative impact of social change. It can happen only if the agents of change (Government, industrialists, non-tribal population) can be a little empathetic and patient with these human beings.

To summarize, constitutional provisions, developmental initiatives, urbanization, industrialization and modernization have affected the Indian tribal society both positively and negatively. The need of the hour is to harness the positive influences and slowly guide the tribal people in the modern way of living without discarding their traditional knowledge and values.

### **10.2.5 Characteristics of Indian Tribal Society**

Tribes are relatively isolated from the non-tribal population and have some kind of a cultural homogeneity. They earn their living from simple economic activities and use very simple technology. They usually follow their own religion and believe in magic, witchcraft and spirits. They practice taboo and have taboos that prohibit

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them from doing anything that is impermissible. Violation of taboos results in punishment handed down by the community or the supernatural.

Many tribal populations believe in animism, which propagates that every animate or inanimate object is inhabited by spirits. Scholars believe that animism was the earliest form of religion of the tribes. Tribal society is inconceivable without magic. Techniques being simple, the ability of the tribes to control the processes of nature is limited. Hence, reliance upon the supernatural is very high.

The main characteristics of Indian tribes are as follows:

- **Common name:** Each tribe has its own name that distinguishes it from another tribe.
- **Common territory:** Every tribe has a traditional territory, which it occupies. Emigrants always refer to such territory as their homes.
- **Common language:** Members of an Indian tribe speak a common language. Each tribe has its own dialect even if it does not have its own script.
- **Common culture:** Each tribe has unique customs and rituals to follow and its own festivals to celebrate. They have their own Gods to worship and taboos to observe strictly.
- **Endogamy:** The Indian tribes are endogamous and the members of a particular tribe usually marry within the same tribe. However, in respect of clans within a tribe, they practice clan exogamy and do not marry within the same clan.
- **Political organization:** Politically, Indian tribes are under the overall control of the state government and are also governed by the Panchayats. However, they all have their own political organizations where the elders control the others. These organizations are usually in the nature of village councils.
- **Simple economy:** Generally, the members of the Indian tribes are engaged in economic activities that are primitive in nature and require simple tools and techniques to be employed. Agriculture, both shifting and normal, and gathering of forest produce are the chief economic activities of Indian tribes. Artisans also are a significant part of the tribal community. Despite the advent of the modern economy, the tribes still depend upon barter system in many parts of the country.
- **Kinship:** The tribes of India are closely knit due to the strong kinship bonds that they share. Kinship operates within every Indian tribe as a strong regulative and integrating principle. In tribal life, the principal links for the whole society are based on kinship. Kinship is not only a principle of social organization; it is also a principle of inheritance, division of labour and distribution of power and privileges.
- **Dormitories:** The dormitory institution in tribal society is a unique feature and is also seen among the Indian tribes. The Nagas of Assam call the dormitories as *Morung*. In Uttar Pradesh, it is known as *Rangbhang*. The

Munda and Ho tribes of Madhya Pradesh call their dormitories *Gitiora*. Gonds call it as *Gotul*. Youth dormitories are the place where tribal people learn the facts of life. This institution, till a few years ago, was solely responsible for education and social change amongst the young tribal. It is slowly weakening due to the advent of modern education and greater access of the tribal children to schools.

- **Low literacy:** Due to paucity of modern and formal schools in tribal areas, access to modern education is limited. Therefore, literacy levels are very low among the Indian tribes. Besides, till independence, formal education was a distant dream for the tribal and they had only their education system to fall back upon. Through concerted efforts by the Government and NGOs, the literacy rate among the Indian tribes is slowly creeping up.

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### Check Your Progress

1. What is a tribal society?
2. What is the percentage of tribal population living in India?
3. Mention any two constitutional provisions aimed at safeguarding the interests of the tribal people.

## 10.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. A tribal society can be defined as the common living space of the different tribal communities residing in a defined and demarcated territory. The members of these societies lead their lives in accordance with their societal norms, practices and beliefs.
2. As per Census 2011, tribals constitute about 8.6 per cent of India's total population.
3. Two constitutional provisions aimed at safeguarding the interests of the tribal people are the following:
  - **Article 23**-Prohibits human trafficking and forced labour.
  - **Article 29**-Cultural and educational rights: This article provides protection to Scheduled Tribes to preserve their language, dialects and cultures.

## 10.4 SUMMARY

- The term 'tribe' has been defined in various ways by different scholars. The origin of the term tribe lies in the Latin word *tribus*, which referred to the three divisions into which the early Romans were divided.

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- At present, according to Western scholars, the term tribe means an ethnic group that is geographically isolated and identified with one particular territory.
- Tribal societies exhibit a remarkable economy of design and have a compactness and self-sufficiency lacking in modern society.
- The Republic of India aims to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. It denies giving any official recognition to the traditional system of stratification of various castes and tribes into numerous sub-divisions.
- A tribal society can be defined as the common living space of the different tribal communities residing in a defined and demarcated territory. The members of these societies lead their lives in accordance with their societal norms, practices and beliefs.
- While distinguishing a tribe from a caste in India, Bailey writes that an ideal tribe has always an organic unity, which is characterized by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system. On the other hand, an ideal caste encourages interactions and always hankers after a position in the hierarchical system.
- The tribal population in India, in absolute terms, is the highest in the world at 8.43 crore (provisional figures as given by the 2011 census). Tribal constitute about 7 per cent of India's total population and an overwhelming majority of them (about 92 per cent) reside in rural areas.
- The bulk of the tribal population regard themselves as Hindus. The influence of Hindu religion on the tribes is tremendous and almost 90 per cent of the tribal follow it in one form or the other.
- The linguistic classification of Indian tribes is very complex. According to a recent estimate, the tribal people speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages.
- Various social scientists have classified tribal populations on the basis of their economic activity. Indian tribes have also been thus classified.
- Indian tribes are also classified according to their cultural distance from the rural–urban groups.
- The traditional and inwards looking tribal society of India has been gradually changing and adapting to modern ways of living.
- The tribal areas have undergone the influence of urbanization and industrialization, which can be considered as important processes of change. Urbanization refers to the development of towns and cities and an urbanized way of life.
- Urbanization and industrialization processes have affected the Indian tribes both positively and negatively.

- Tribes are relatively isolated from the non-tribal population and have some kind of a cultural homogeneity. They earn their living from simple economic activities and use very simple technology.
- The dormitory institution in tribal society is a unique feature and is also seen among the Indian tribes. The Nagas of Assam call the dormitories as *Morung*.

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### 10.5 KEY WORDS

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- **Ethnicity:** It is defined as a shared culture and way of life, including history, language, religion, and culture.
- **Autochthonous:** This refers to indigenous rather than descended from migrants or colonists.
- **Detribalization:** It is the act of causing tribal people to abandon their customs and adopt an urban way of life.
- **Barter economy:** It is a method of exchange by which goods or services are directly exchanged for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange.
- **Bride price:** It is a sum of money or quantity of goods given to the bride's family by that of the groom, especially in tribal societies.

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### 10.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. How have the Western scholars interpreted the word 'tribe'?
2. State the differences between 'tribe' and 'caste'.
3. Briefly mention the linguistic classification of tribes in India.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the classification of tribes in India on the basis of religion and location.
2. Discuss the various constitutional provisions enacted by the Indian government for safeguarding the interests of the tribal population.
3. Critically examine the characteristics of the Indian tribal society.

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### 10.7 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 11 TRIBES AND CASTES

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### Structure

- 11.0 Introduction
- 11.1 Objectives
- 11.2 Tribes and Castes in India
  - 11.2.1 Tribes-Castes Continuum
  - 11.2.2 Diffusion of Tribes-Castes
  - 11.2.3 Acculturation of Tribes-Castes
  - 11.2.4 Problem of Integration and Contra-acculturation
- 11.3 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 11.4 Summary
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- 11.7 Further Readings

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### 11.0 INTRODUCTION

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In India tribal population constitutes 8.6 per cent of the total population. Since the term 'tribe' has derogative connotations, in many countries 'indigenous people' is used instead. However, both the terms have colonial overtone. In India, the term 'tribe' is an administrative category and the 'tribal people' have been labelled as the Scheduled Tribes. In this unit, you will study about the diffusion, acculturation, problems of integration and contra-acculturation of tribes and castes.

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### 11.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the features of tribes and castes in India
- Examine the diffusion of tribes and castes
- Interpret the acculturation of tribes and castes
- Outline the various problems of integration and contra-acculturation

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### 11.2 TRIBES AND CASTES IN INDIA

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The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are formally delegated clusters of traditionally underprivileged individuals in our country. The expressions are documented in the Constitution of India and the clusters are chosen in one or other of the groups. During the period of the British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. The individuals comprising Scheduled Castes are fundamentally the smallest part of Hindu society but in the contemporary

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narrative, the Scheduled Castes are occasionally referred to as untouchables. The term 'Dalit' which implies 'broken or scattered' in Sanskrit and Hindi was popularized by B. R. Ambedkar—the economist, reformer and maker of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar favoured the expression Dalit to Gandhi's term 'Harijan' which implied 'person of Hari/Vishnu' or Man of God.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent of India's population as per Census of 2011. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 states 1,108 castes across 29 states in its First Schedule and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule ever since the independence of the country. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been given reservation ensuring political representation and the Constitution of the country has come with several rules ensuring their reservation.

### 11.2.1 Tribes-Castes Continuum

Anthropologists have expressed different definitions of the term 'tribe' and 'caste'. These terms come to have different connotations from the Indian perspective. As per G. S. Ghurye tribal people constitute backward population as compared to the other sections of the community. Verrier Elwin, educator and missionary in India, put forward the argument for the acknowledgment of different societal and artistic individuality of tribal individuals. As per Indian sociologist and writer, Andre Beteille there are definite distinctions between tribe and caste. The main distinguishing factor between tribe and caste is language. Tribes speak their own dialect, that is, a local dialect; for example, Mundas and Oraons of Chota Nagpur speak different dialects. Tribes are characterized in terms of geographical region and this is another differentiating factor between a tribe and caste. Tribes encompass their own world and therefore, exhibit several unique features unlike a caste group.

As per sociologist, N.K Bose there are numerous similarities in traditions between tribes and castes and they are mutually interdependent. Marriage within the tribe is prohibited both in the tribe as well as in the caste. As per British ethnographer and colonial administrator, Herbert Risley the practice of endogamy is not strictly enforced in the tribe whereas such is not the case in a caste. Max Weber has written in *Social Structure* that when an Indian tribe loses its importance territory wise, it takes the form of a caste. In this manner, the tribe becomes a local group whereas caste is a social group. As per anthropologist, D.N Majumdar the tribe views the rituals of Hinduism as separate from their own rituals and over indulging; while in the case of a caste the worship of Gods and Goddesses is an essential requisite of religion.

In caste, individuals pursue the vocation decided as per their occupation; whereas in a tribe individuals are free to follow the profession of their choice. As per American sociologist Bailey, tribe and caste should be viewed as a coherent whole. He is of the opinion that a caste society is based on hierarchy whereas a tribal society is composed of numerous segments arranged together. However, he

has also shared the belief that in contemporary India, both tribe and caste are losing their rigid individualities and are getting moulded in a completely unique system.

It is to be noted that the tribes in India have been influenced by the various communities living near them. Since most of these communities are Hindus, so the tribals have come in contact with the Hindu rituals and practices and perhaps adopted them indirectly as well.

The ethnographic evidences ascertain that the contacts varied from semi-isolation to absolute assimilation of Hindu traditions. The recent studies of tribes in the Western Himalayas and Central India have ascertained this fact that some of the tribes have assimilated Hindu traditions and rituals to the extent of becoming completely Hinduized.

Research study conducted on the two major Central Himalayan tribes, i.e., Tharu and Khasa has revealed that even though they continue to practice their own tribal customs yet they have been accepted as Kshatriya. Their culture has come to share close resemblance with that of the Rajputs. Likewise, there are numerous tribal communities which have got assimilated in the Hindu social matrix.

### **11.2.2 Diffusion of Tribes-Castes**

The primary factors driving migration of human population are geographical terrain and utilization of natural resources. These factors facilitate the diffusion of population. India is home to 4,600 ethnic groups; however, diversity in terms of language exists within these groups. The Indian society has been stratified into castes and tribes ensuring that these rigid social categorizations continue despite urbanization.

### **11.2.3 Acculturation of Tribes-Castes**

Acculturation is defined as the process of assimilating the culture, traditions, rituals and principles of another dominant group. It is to be noted that several aspects have brought about changes or alterations in the cultural traditions of the tribes. These factors include the process of urbanization, social mobility, contact with the neighbouring communities, impact of Christianity, emergence of modern cities and modern day reforms.

The procedure of acculturation has been found among many tribes in different states and its best illustration has been pointed out by Binay Kumar Patnaik's study of 'Sabaras' in Ghorabar village in Orissa. The procedure of experiencing acculturation by the tribe is found in the subsequent alterations:

- The structural composition of the tribe has been modified to the extent of becoming less segmentary. Moreover, the tribe has come to adopt the class stratification prevalent in the Hindu society.
- The tribal society is hierarchically divided into four fragments resembling the Hindu Varna structure.

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- Like the caste system among the Sabaras too each sub-caste has its own panchayat which functions as a watch-dog of the society traditions.
- The influence of Hindu culture is significant on the marriage traditions of Sabaras, though inter-caste marriage is forbidden. However, bride price has been substituted by dowry.

If one examines change in the culture of tribes in India one can observe six alterations and these are as follows:

- The tribals get predominantly influenced by those who live near-by. The tribals get to imbibe the cultural traits of the dominant group associated in their proximity.
- The nature of transformation is such that the tribes do not lose their original identity completely. The tribes still portray themselves as tribes and not Hindus.
- In some parts of country, the tribals have adopted some attributes of Christianity especially in North-East and North West India and this has been confirmed by various researches conducted in the recent years.
- Agro-industrialization in the tribal areas has affected the socio-cultural life of the tribals to the extent that changes in the family structure, institution of marriage, authority structure, interpersonal relationship and weakening of panchayat's authority have come to be experienced.

### 11.2.4 Problem of Integration and Contra-acculturation

The problem of tribal development in relation to integration and contra-acculturation has been faced by the Indian society right from the British rule in India. Integration of tribes has taken place on terms of the conventional society with the sole objective of assimilating them in the mainstream. The Indian government acquired tribal lands for establishing new mining and infrastructure projects without providing suitable compensation to the tribals. Such actions of the government led to the subjugation of the tribals leading to the dilapidation of the natural sources on which the tribals were dependent.

- **Land Isolation:** The history of land isolation among the tribes began during the era of British colonialism in our country when the British hindered in the tribal area with the objective of utilizing the natural resources used by the tribals. Moreover, the tribals' lands were taken over by the moneylenders, zamindars and traders who advanced loans to the tribals. The opening of mines in the centre of tribal surroundings and even a few businesses provided wage labour as well as prospect for factory service but this brought rising impoverishment and dislocation of the tribals. In addition, the policies of the British were entirely commercial which obstructed the prospects of the tribal population. Some forests were declared as reserved ones where only authorized service providers were allowed to enter.

- **Poverty and Indebtedness:** Majority of the tribes are living under the line of poverty as these tribes are engaged in simple professions which uses simple technology and most of the occupation falls into the primary occupations such as hunting, gathering and agriculture. The expertise that they employ for these purposes belong to the most prehistoric kind and even there is no profit and surplus making in such an economy therefore, the per capita income is very insufficient much lesser than the average of the country. Most of them live under miserable poverty and are in debt in the hands of local moneylenders and landlords. In order to reimburse the debt they often mortgage or sell their land to the moneylenders because indebtedness is almost unavoidable since heavy interest is to be paid to these moneylenders. Banking facilities in the tribal areas are insufficient that the people have been forced to depend upon moneylenders and landlords.
- **Health and Nutrition:** It has been noticed that the tribal population suffers from chronic diseases and infections. Due to lack of access to basic amenities, the tribal population suffers from diseases primarily the water borne diseases. Also, the tribes in the Himalayan region generally suffer from a disease known as goitre and this takes place due to lack of iodine. Even leprosy and tuberculosis are also common among the Indian tribes and castes. Infant mortality was found to be very high among some of the tribes. Malnutrition is widespread and has influenced the general health of the tribal children as it decreases the capability to resist infection which leads to chronic illness and sometimes leads to brain impairment.
- **Education:** The educational aspect of the tribal population in India varies from region to region. Initially, the Indian Government launched no direct programme for their education. However, in subsequent years, the reservation policy has brought about some changes in favour of the education of the tribal population in India. There are many reasons for the low standard of education among the tribal people. Formal education is not considered essential to fulfill their social responsibilities. Most of the tribals are guided by superstitions and orthodox beliefs which makes it difficult for them to adopt new avenues of growth and development. This is one of the primary reasons as to why the tribals continue to live in abject poverty. Formal schooling is difficult to be provided as the tribals often live in remote and inaccessible areas.
- **Cultural Difficulties:** The culture of the tribals has undergone tremendous transformation after coming in contact with other cultures. Also, due to the influence of Christian missionaries the dilemma of bilingualism has expanded which has led to unresponsiveness towards tribal language.
- **Dilemma of Autonomy:** The Divide and Rule policy approved by the British did a lot of harm to the tribal community in the country. The Criminal Tribes Act which the British initiated gave a feeling that the tribals were

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either criminals or anti socials. The tribal groups who fought against the British were branded as dacoits and robbers. The British also endorsed missionary actions especially in the Central and North Eastern hills and all these actions disturbed tribals which attempted to sustain themselves even after the country got independence from the British.

### Check Your Progress

1. What is the percentage composition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Indian population?
2. State one difference between tribe and caste.

## 11.3 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent of India's population as per Census of 2011.
2. On differentiating factor between the tribe and caste is that tribe is a local group whereas caste is a social group.

## 11.4 SUMMARY

- The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are formally delegated clusters of traditionally underprivileged individuals in our country.
- The term 'Dalit' which implies 'broken or scattered' in Sanskrit and Hindi was popularized by B. R. Ambedkar— the economist, reformer, author of the Indian Constitution. Ambedkar favoured the expression Dalit to Gandhi's term 'Harijan' which implied 'person of Hari/Vishnu' or Man of God.
- The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 per cent and 8.6 per cent of India's population as per Census of 2011.
- The main distinguishing factor between tribe and caste is language. Tribes speak their own dialect, that is, a local dialect; for example, Mundas and Oraons of Chota Nagpur speak different dialects.
- In caste, individuals pursue the vocation decided as per their occupation; whereas in a tribe individuals are free to follow the profession of their choice.
- The ethnographic evidences ascertain that the contacts varied from semi-isolation to absolute assimilation of Hindu traditions.
- The primary factors driving migration of human population are geographical terrain and utilization of natural resources.

- Acculturation is defined as the process of assimilating the culture, traditions, rituals and principles of another dominant group.
- The problem of tribal development in relation to integration and contra-acculturations has been faced by the Indian society right from the British rule in India.

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### 11.5 KEY WORDS

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- **Acculturation:** It is a process through which a person or group from one culture comes to adopt the practices and values of another culture, while still retaining their own distinct culture.
- **Diffusion:** In sociology, the term implies spread of elements of culture of one group to another group; basically leading to social change.
- **Agro-industrialization:** It is the form of modern farming that refers to the industrialized production of livestock, poultry, fish and crops.

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### 11.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the diffusion of tribe-caste.
2. Briefly mention acculturation of tribe-caste.

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Examine the differences between tribe and caste.
2. Discuss the problems of integration and contra-acculturation.

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### 11.7 FURTHER READINGS

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**BLOCK - IV**  
**RURAL COMMUNITY: BASIC CHARACTERISTICS**  
**AND FEATURES**

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**NOTES**


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## UNIT 12 RURAL COMMUNITY

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**Structure**

- 12.0 Introduction
- 12.1 Objectives
- 12.2 Bases and Characteristics of Rural Community
  - 12.2.1 Evolution of Rural Community
  - 12.2.2 Growth of Rural Community
  - 12.2.3 Characteristics of the Rural Community
  - 12.2.4 Types of Rural Community
  - 12.2.5 Rural Community in Indian Society
  - 12.2.6 Changing Nature of the Village Community in India
- 12.3 Jajmani System: Features and Changes
- 12.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 12.5 Summary
- 12.6 Key Words
- 12.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 12.8 Further Readings

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### 12.0 INTRODUCTION

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As per the provisional figures of the Census 2011, about 69 per cent of India's population stays in rural areas spread across the country. This is a huge number and very critical statistical information. The rural society of India is very much backward. Its backwardness is due to the several problems that haunt the rural society. The process of change in rural society is quite slow and so the problems are more or less age old. This unit will introduce you to the characteristics of the village community, evolution of rural community, types of rural community and the changing nature of the village community. Moreover, the unit discusses in brief the *Jajmani* system and how today India has gradually become a developing economy.

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### 12.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the evolution of the rural community
- List the characteristics of rural community

- State the types of rural community
- Evaluate the changing nature of the Indian village community
- Examine the salient features of the *Jajmani* system

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### 12.2 BASES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL COMMUNITY

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A rural community is defined as a group of people living in a definite geographical area. It is characterized by common beliefs, common practices, common lifestyle and various types of social interactions. The term 'rural' refers to a small area with a small population, which practices agriculture not only as an occupation but also as a way of life.

The famous French sociologist Louis Dumont refers to the following three meanings of the term rural community:

- A political society
- A body of co-owners of the soil
- The emblem of traditional economy and polity

The rural society is, simply put, an aggregation of village communities. In other words, a rural society is a collection of village communities and has the same features and characteristics that a village community has.

The village exists even today as a cohesive territorial unit. The number of people staying in villages bears testimony to this. However, village identity, solidarity and loyalty sometimes get affected by caste and religious considerations. There are factions and feuding groups within villages and between villages. Land reforms, Panchayati Raj, Sanskritization and other structural and cultural changes have brought about significant changes within its social structure and its relation with the wider world. A village is clearly an important and viable social entity to its people, who also take part in the larger society and share in the pattern of the civilization.

A village signifies the transition from nomadic settlement to stable and stationary settlement. The village is the oldest permanent community of mankind. Villages and village communities have existed in every part of the world and they were the earliest examples of permanent and stationary settlement of the human race.

#### 12.2.1 Evolution of Rural Community

A village community has passed through different stages of evolution. Some of them are as follows:

- **Primitive village community:** The primitive village community was very small in size and consisted of only ten families or thereabouts. The families

were very close to each other. Social relationships amongst them were quite strong. In earlier times, due to lack of transport and communication facilities, the members of one village community were cut-off from the other village community. The community was organized on a collectivist basis in so far as land was concerned. Land was jointly owned by all the members of all the families. The bond of kinship and close ties that existed between the families ensured that there was a high degree of community feeling in them.

- **Medieval village community:** In this type of community, neither joint ownership of land was there nor did kinship play an important role in binding the people together. The land was owned by the kings or the nobles. The common villagers cultivated the land and were paid wages by the owners of the land. They were the tenants and the land owners were their masters. The feudal system came into existence during this period where the masters exploited the tenants and expected complete servility and loyalty from the tenants.
- **Modern village community:** Modernization and industrialization brought a halt to the growth of the village community. Instead, urban communities began to develop and flourish. However, despite this, villages and village communities continue to exist across the world. In India, it is still the dominant form of settlement with 69 per cent of Indians residing in villages as per the provisional figures of Census 2011. In India, after independence, with the spread of transport and communication, village life has been brought closer to the urban life. Villages got connected with cities due to the building of new roads and railway tracks. This helped the market reach the villages and provide the villagers with the opportunity of using the market for getting better prices for their produce. Thus, the process of modernization started in the villages.

### 12.2.2 Growth of Rural Community

The following factors are responsible for the growth of village communities across nations:

- **Topographical factors:** Topographical factors include land, water and climate. Land is the most important factor and significantly contributes towards the establishment and growth of village communities. Village communities can survive and grow only on fertile land because agriculture thrives on such land. Therefore, historically, villages have come up on fertile land tracts and rocky and sandy lands have been avoided.

The availability of water also plays a crucial role in the settlement of village communities. The villages that have a river or stream nearby are usually heavily populated. Water provides life to human beings, animals and

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crops. It would be impossible to survive if water is unavailable or is available at a great distance. Easy availability of water and presence of irrigation facilities helps the villagers in earning higher incomes through higher agricultural produce. Higher incomes bring prosperity and the village community adopts modernity and features of capitalism.

A favourable climate is also essential for the growth of the village community. People cannot lead a normal and healthy life in places having extreme heat, cold or rain.

- **Economic factors:** A village community's growth and development depends upon the condition of its agricultural sector. If this sector does well, then the villagers earn more and move forward in life. It also depends upon the overall village economy and how it enables farmers to get a better return on their agricultural produce. A third economic factor is the status of the cottage industries. If the cottage industries sector do well then the villagers get to earn some additional income.
- **Social factors:** Social factors have a very important role in the growth of a village community. Factors like peace and security, cooperation, celebration of festivals together do go a long way in securing the growth of the village community. These factors ensure safety of the villagers' lives; assure cooperation in economic and other matters and promote a feeling of oneness amongst them.

In the ultimate analysis, it is evident that it is knowledge and intelligence that can ensure growth and development of villages and village communities. With low levels of literacy and poor quality of education, village communities in developing and under developed countries are not able to raise their farm productivity. This results in low incomes and keeps them perpetually in a state of deprivation. In contrast, the village communities in the advanced western countries are far more developed and prosperous.

### 12.2.3 Characteristics of the Rural Community

A village community has certain characteristics or features, which are unique to it. They are as follows:

- **Community feeling:** Village communities have a very strong feeling of togetherness and stand up for one and all in trying times. They also have common practices, beliefs, rituals and customs. This ensures that their bonding becomes stronger.
- **Strong neighbourhood:** The village life is one of togetherness and sharing of joys and sorrows. People come to each other's help and live as one big family. Thus, neighbours matter a lot to them and a strong neighbourhood is an important feature of the village community.

- **Joint family:** While urban growth and industrialization has managed to break up the joint family, the scenario is different in rural areas. The joint family continues to be an integral part of the village communities. One major reason for this is their practice of agriculture. The entire family works on the field and there is a division of labour amongst them. The men plough the field, the women help in transplanting the seeds and harvesting the crops, and the children look after the cattle.
- **Simple lifestyle of people:** People in villages are generally simple and lead a life of simplicity. They are unaffected by the rapid changes happening in the urban areas. They are hardworking, trustworthy, sincere and honest. It is also a fact that they do not earn very much and, therefore, do not get an opportunity to adopt a more affluent lifestyle. Thus, their simplicity is mostly voluntary and partly involuntary. However, with the spread of communication, villagers are getting exposed to urban and modern lifestyles and have started adopting them in a very gradual manner.
- **Agrarian economy:** Village communities generally thrive on agriculture and the village economy is essentially an agrarian economy. People cultivate crops, vegetables and fruits. A major part is consumed by the family itself and the surplus is either bartered for some other goods or it is sold off in the local market.
- **Small size:** Village communities usually comprise a small number of people who can manage to stay in a village with peace and contentment. The number of people comprising a village community is not fixed as such.
- **Definite locality:** A village community has a definite physical basis, which is the village in which they reside. Every such community is identifiable from the locality or village in which they reside.
- **Influence of religion:** Religion plays a very important role in the life of village communities. They are God-fearing and worship a lot. Their belief in religion is very strong and they have faith that their troubles would be sorted out by the Almighty.
- **Importance of kinship and primary relations:** Kinship is an important part of the village life. Personal relations are very durable and people are always keen to spend time with their relatives.
- **Conservative behaviour:** People in villages are very conservative in their thoughts and deeds. They are influenced by the socialization that they had been exposed to. There is no drive in them to bring about sudden changes or to adopt modernity. Village communities essentially remain the same for years together.

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### 12.2.4 Types of Rural Community

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Across the globe, different types of village communities have emerged and existed in different periods of our collective history. Village communities differ from each other in various aspects like social systems, folk-cultures, traditions, economy, value systems, etc. Thus, an American village is different from a German village and an Indian village or *Gram* is different from a Russian village.

These differences have been studied by sociologists and different types of village communities have been identified. Some of the major types of village community are as follows:

- **On the basis of residence:** Residence is a very important parameter for classifying the village communities. On the basis of residence, following classifications are as follows:
  - o **Migratory village:** Such a community resides for a certain period of time at one place and arranges its daily needs (food and shelter) from that place. Once the food supplies get exhausted, the community moves on to another place and again sets up a village.
  - o **Semi-permanent village:** In this village, the community resides for a number of years and then leaves the place when the productivity of the land dwindles. Lower productivity is detrimental to their survival and, therefore, they move out in search of more fertile lands.
  - o **Permanent village:** The people live in such villages permanently. Generations spend their lives here. Permanent houses exist in these villages and families continue to live and earn their livelihood here.
- **On the basis of settlement:** Meitzen has classified village communities into the following two types on the basis of their settlement:
  - o **Nucleated village:** In this type of a village, the community lives in close proximity and the houses of the members are in one cluster. This physical proximity fosters the leading of a common life by the community and also lends a sense of security to them.
  - o **Scattered village:** In this type of settlement, the village community lives in a dispersed manner and the houses of the members are away from one another. Due to this, the physical proximity is less but they do celebrate common festivals and functions.
- **On the basis of organization:** Village communities can be classified into the following three types on the basis of the manner in which they are organized:
  - o **Cooperative village:** In this type of village, though land is owned individually, the members of the community decide to pool their land

and practice common cultivation. Each family is provided with its necessities from the common stock of the cooperative.

- o **Semi-collective village:** In this type of villages, the land is jointly owned and the members of the community cultivate this joint holding. Families are provided with supplies in accordance with the income of the village. Families get their share on the basis of their numerical strength.
- o **Collective villages:** The village community in this village lives in a communal settlement where all property is collectively owned and all the affairs of life are collectively managed. The members only render their labour to the common pool and all necessities of life are provided to them. They have common dining hall, common store, etc. The old and infirm are also taken care of by the community as a whole. This kind of organization provides complete security to every member of the village.
- **On the basis of land ownership:** On this basis, the village community has been classified into the following two types:
  - o **Landlord village:** In this type of a community, land is owned by a few families on an individual basis and they are the landlords. They rent out their land to tenants for cultivation. The rent that they charge from the tenants is largely retained by them and a share is given to the king or ruler. Such type of villages existed in India till the time the intermediaries in the agricultural sector were abolished.
  - o **Ryotwari village:** In such villages, the farmers are the owners of the land and they themselves cultivate it. They pay the land revenue to the government directly and no intermediary is involved.

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### 12.2.5 गीरश्र उर्गीपळू कप खपवळरप डेलकशू

Villages are an integral part of Indian society. The rural landscape of India is dotted with lakhs of villages. There are 6.41 lakh villages in India, which is a huge number. Rural society in India is nothing but the study of the village communities of India. Though urban population in India is increasing, about 69 per cent of Indians still reside in its villages. Thus, the expansion of the village community in India is enormous. The sociological study of the communities of India reveals the true nature of the rural society in India.

Common characteristics of Indian villages are as follows:

- **Isolation and self-sufficiency:** Villages in India were, and still are to some extent, isolated from the rest of the country. They have a self-sufficient existence wherein they grow their own food, build their own houses and carry out social relationships amongst each other within the village.



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However, post-independence, things have changed quite a lot. With the growth of means of transport and communication and the laying of an extensive road and rail network, the distance or barrier between villages and towns has been removed. Political and economic factors have also contributed towards diminishing the isolation of Indian villages. Economic development has made the people of the villages more mobile and they are moving out to urban centers in search of new employment opportunities. Their dependence on agriculture has come down significantly. Political parties have also made villages the epicenter of their political activities. Many people from rural areas have actively joined politics and made frequent visits to their party headquarters in the cities.

- **Peace and simplicity:** Indian villages are generally peaceful wherein people reside together with a spirit of togetherness and have a fellow feeling. An atmosphere of calm and simplicity prevails in our villages. The hectic pace of activities prevalent in our cities is conspicuously absent from the villages. Life moves along at a slow but fulfilling pace. The villagers lead a simple life characterized by frugal eating, simple dressing, small houses, etc.
- **Conservatism:** Indian villagers are very conservative in their thoughts and deeds. They do not accept change very easily. They prefer to hold on to their old customs and traditions.
- **Poverty and illiteracy:** The poverty and illiteracy that exists in our villages on a massive scale is one of the most depressing features of our villages and also a very shameful aspect of modern India. Despite independence and rapid economic progress, we have failed in eradicating poverty and illiteracy from our villages. The per-capita income might have increased and the literacy rate might have climbed up, but the fact remains that the levels are abysmal by global standards. The per-capita income is so low that people at the bottom of the pyramid cannot think beyond their survival. Similarly, the quality of education is so poor that the literacy rates mean nothing significant.

Economic growth of the last twenty years has not percolated down to our villages. The availability of educational and health facilities is very poor. Lack of money forces them to depend upon local facilities, which are of very poor quality. Ignorance does not enable them to take advantage of modern techniques of agriculture. Thus, they continue to remain in poverty. A vicious cycle of poverty–ignorance–poverty engulfs the life of our villagers.

- **Local self-government:** In ancient India, villages were models of self-governance and autonomy. They used to run their own administration and judiciary through the institution of Panchayat. The British altered the scenario by resorting to a highly centralized form of governance. However, post-independence, efforts were started to revive the institutions of local self-

governance under Gandhiji's vision of Gram Swaraj. This culminated in the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in 1993 by which the Panchayati Raj institutions were strengthened. Thus, a prominent feature of the Indian villages has been restored with constitutional backing.

### 12.2.6 Changing Nature of the Village Community in India

Though change occurs more in urban society, it also does take place in the rural society. The village community undergoes change but at a gradual pace. The changing nature of the village community in India can be understood from the following perspectives:

- **Economic system:** The village economy in India has changed. It no longer remains an agricultural economy alone. The educated youth do not stay back in the villages anymore. Rather, they move out to cities in search of employment. Besides, the farmers have started to employ modern tools and technology in their fields to get more out of their land. Thus, the mechanization of agriculture is also taking place. Rural banking has encouraged the village community to put their savings in the bank and also to avail credit facilities. They use this credit in starting small business ventures and also in meeting some emergency expenses in the family.
- **Political system:** The revival of the 'Panchayati Raj' system in Indian villages through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 has truly changed the political landscape in rural India. Political consciousness and participation in electoral politics has increased tremendously. People have become very aware about local, state and national politics. However, the negative impact of this change is that people have become divided on lines of political affiliations. The fellow feeling of our village community has been adversely affected.
- **Marriage system:** Indian villages have slowly accepted the reality of love marriages. Even though majority of marriages in our villages are arranged by family elders, a few love marriages are indeed taking place. Besides, even in arranged marriages, the boys and girls are being asked to give their views or consent. Child marriage has been almost abolished.
- **Family system:** The joint family system is no more the dominant family type in Indian villages. Nuclear families have also started coming up. Though the extended family stays in close vicinity, the nuclear families have been established through separate hearths. Girls in the family are being educated and their status in rural society has improved.
- **Caste system:** The caste system used to be followed very rigidly in Indian villages in earlier times. However, modern education, social and administrative reforms, impact of modernization, etc. has resulted in reducing its hold over

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the village community. The restrictions imposed by the caste system on choice of occupations, choice of spouses, mode of living, etc. have weakened.

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From the above, it is clear that Indian villages are not static but undergoing changes.

### Check Your Progress

1. List the characteristics of rural community.
2. What are the significant features of the primitive village community?

## 12.3 JAJMANI SYSTEM: FEATURES AND CHANGES

It is important to discuss India's traditional social structure while discussing industrialization in India. The caste system was a closed system of stratification based on division of labour on occupational specialization.

Basic features of the caste system include the following:

- Occupational specialization
- Hereditary system
- Endogamous
- Hierarchy

Historically, it defined communities into thousands of endogamous hereditary groups called *Jâtis*. The *Jâtis* were grouped into *Varnas*: viz., Brahmins, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas*, and *Shudras*. Brahmins are the priestly caste, *Kshatriya*—the warrior caste, *Vaishyas* are the trading caste and *Shudras* are the ones who did the menial work. Some (sweepers, etc.) were excluded altogether, ostracized by all other castes and treated as untouchables.

The Indian Government officially recognizes Untouchables and *Shudras* as Scheduled Castes, the historically discriminated lowest castes of India, and Other Backward Castes or OBCs, as those who are economically and socially backward. In present times, the Scheduled Castes are sometimes referred to as *Dalits*.

The proportion of the *Dalit* population in India was 16.2 per cent in 2001. Many laws and social initiatives have been enacted and implemented to protect and improve the socio-economic conditions of the *Dalit* population since 1950. By 1995, in the Central Government services, 17.2 per cent of the jobs were held by *Dalits*. In the last 15 years, some of the highest posts in the judiciary and political offices have been occupied by the discriminated backward castes. This has improved the quality of life of the *Dalit* population in India in terms of poverty,

literacy rate, access to health care, life expectancy, education attainability, access to drinking water, housing, etc. The caste system, although it is mainly identified with Hinduism, is also prevalent among other religions in the Indian subcontinent, including among the religious groups of Muslims, Buddhists and Christians.

The caste system was an occupation-based specialization of social groups and with industrialization, new professions and occupations came up. The previous occupations become defunct in some cases, and a person could be born in a family of a *Vaishya* Aggarwal trader, but could still join the army, or teach or do anything he wanted to do. The rule of hereditary family profession was no longer applicable. A person could also marry into other castes.

According to a 2003 report, inter-caste marriages are on the rise in urban India. This is due to factors such as the following:

- Female literacy
- Women employment
- Urbanization
- Rise of nuclear families
- Requirement of two-income families
- Influence of the media

The fastest and most significant socio-economic changes in India's overall economic growth, has helped to rectify the injustice done to a large section of its population.

Though industrialization, has led to a rise in new occupations in society with its class-based system stratification, it has not replaced the caste system. It has only weakened the prejudices and superstitions of the traditional system of stratification.

### ***Jajmani* System**

The *Jajmani* system is an economic system followed in Indian villages, where lower castes received grain and in return performed various functions for upper castes.

Under the *Jajmani* system goods and services are exchanged between the landowning higher castes and landless service castes. The service castes were leather workers, blacksmiths, weavers, barbers, washer men, goldsmiths, and a group of artisans serving the community. The patron of landed higher castes was referred to as the *Jajman* and the *kamin* were the service castes. It was the link between the landowning high castes and occupational castes as it was based on the agricultural system of production and distribution of goods and services.

In a village, every caste groups is traditionally bound to give certain standardized services to the families of other castes. It is based on the barter

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system, the landowners or high caste families receive services from lower castes and in return, members of the lower castes receive food grains.

William Wiser introduced '*Jajmani*' as a term into Indian social anthropology and sociology. His study was based on a village in Uttar Pradesh and he described the production and exchange of goods and services here and how different castes interacted with one another in that community. This economic system has existed since centuries throughout the country in different forms.

### Aspects of the *Jajmani* system

- Permanent relationships
- Hereditary relations
- Castes received grains in exchange for services rendered
- Barter system

In present times, this system has led to rebellion by the lower castes against the *zamindars* in areas like Bihar, Telengana, etc. The *Jajmani* system was, and in some places still is, a feature in the rural villages of India. Many tribals and backward castes have taken up arms and have become Naxalites to avenge the exploitation they have faced at the hands of upper castes. The *Jajmani* system enforced the stratification espoused by the caste system.

Industrialization along with urbanization has provided people with the choice to migrate to cities and work in factories to escape this oppressive system in villages.

Since 1991, the country has moved towards a market-based economy with continued economic liberalization. By 2008, India had established itself as one of the world's fastest growing economies. Growth slowed significantly to 6.8 per cent in 2008–09, but recovered subsequently to 7.4 per cent in 2009–10. In 2011, India's public debt stood at 68.05 per cent of GDP which is the highest among the emerging economies. However, inflation is the highest among its BRICS counterparts and remains stubbornly high with 7.55 per cent in August 2012.

The large service industry of India accounts for 57.2 per cent of the country's GDP while the industrial and agricultural sectors contribute 28.6 per cent and 14.6 per cent respectively. In rural India, agriculture is the predominant occupation, accounting for about 52 per cent of employment. The service sector makes up for a further 34 per cent and the industrial sector around 14 per cent. However, statistics from a 2009–10 government survey, suggested that the share of agriculture in employment had dropped to 45.5 per cent it used a smaller sample size than earlier surveys.

Telecommunications, textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, software and pharmaceuticals are the chief industries. India's workforce is estimated at around

five hundred million workers. Key agricultural products include rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, water buffaloes, sheep, goats, poultry and fish. In the years 2011–2012, India's top five trading partners were the United Arab Emirates, the United States, China, Saudi Arabia and Switzerland.

India's GDP is estimated to have increased 7.2 per cent in 2017-18 and 7 per cent in 2018-19. India has retained its position as the third largest startup base in the world with over 4,750 technology start-ups. With the improvement in the economic scenario, there have been various investments in various sectors of the economy. The M&A activity in India reached record US\$ 129.4 billion in 2018 while private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) investments reached US\$ 20.5 billion. India is expected to be the third largest consumer economy as its consumption may triple to US\$ 4 trillion by 2025, owing to shift in consumer behaviour and expenditure pattern, according to a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report; and is estimated to surpass USA to become the second largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) by the year 2040, according to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

All these figures are sufficient to prove that though India was a late starter in the field of industrialization and faced a lot of problems, it is now on its way to becoming a developed industrial economy.

### Check Your Progress

3. Mention the basic features of the caste system.
4. What is the *Jajmani* system?

## 12.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The characteristics of rural community are the following:
  - Community feeling
  - Strong neighbourhood
  - Joint family
  - Simple lifestyle of people
2. The primitive village community was very small in size and consisted of only ten families or thereabouts. The families were very close to each other. Social relationships amongst them were quite strong. The community was organized on a collectivist basis in so far as land was concerned. Land was jointly owned by all the members of all the families.

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3. The basic features of the caste system are the following:
  - Occupational specialization
  - Hereditary system
  - Endogamous
  - Hierarchy
4. The *Jajmani* system is an economic system followed in Indian villages, where lower castes received grain and in return performed various functions for upper castes.

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## 12.5 SUMMARY

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- A rural community is defined as a group of people living in a definite geographical area. It is characterized by common beliefs, common practices, common lifestyle and various types of social interactions.
- The rural society is, simply put, an aggregation of village communities. In other words, a rural society is a collection of village communities and has the same features and characteristics that a village community has.
- A village signifies the transition from nomadic settlement to stable and stationary settlement. The village is the oldest permanent community of mankind.
- Modernization and industrialization brought a halt to the growth of the village community. Instead, urban communities began to develop and flourish.
- Topographical factors include land, water and climate. Land is the most important factor and significantly contributes towards the establishment and growth of village communities.
- A village community's growth and development depends upon the condition of its agricultural sector. If this sector does well, then the villagers earn more and move forward in life.
- People in villages are generally simple and lead a life of simplicity. They are unaffected by the rapid changes happening in the urban areas.
- Across the globe, different types of village communities have emerged and existed in different periods of our collective history. Village communities differ from each other in various aspects like social systems, folk-cultures, traditions, economy, value systems, etc.
- Villages are an integral part of Indian society. The rural landscape of India is dotted with lakhs of villages.
- Villages in India were, and still are to some extent, isolated from the rest of the country. They have a self-sufficient existence wherein they grow their

own food, build their own houses and carry out social relationships amongst each other within the village.

- The poverty and illiteracy that exists in our villages on a massive scale is one of the most depressing features of our villages and also a very shameful aspect of modern India.

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### 12.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Rural community:** It is defined as a group of people living in a definite geographical area.
- **Conservatism:** It is commitment to traditional values and ideas with opposition to change.
- **Capitalism:** It is an economic system in which capital goods are owned by private individuals or businesses.
- **Nucleated village:** In this type of village, the community lives in close proximity and the houses of the members are in one cluster.
- **Gross domestic product:** It is the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
- **Economic liberalization:** It implies reducing the regulations and restrictions imposed by the government in an economy in exchange for greater participation by private entities.

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### 12.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. Mention the various characteristics of a rural community.
2. Write a short note on the changing nature of the Indian village community.
3. What are the factors responsible for the rise of inter-caste marriages in urban India?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. 'A village signifies the transition from nomadic settlement to stable and stationary settlement.' Explain the statement.
2. Discuss the factors responsible for the growth of village community.
3. Explain the types of rural community.
4. Critically examine the salient features of the *Jajmani* system.



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## 12.8 FURTHER READINGS

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### NOTES

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## UNIT 13 PATTERN AND STRUCTURE

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### NOTES

#### Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Power Structure and Leadership Pattern: Bases, Functions and Emerging Trends
- 13.3 Values and Norms
- 13.4 Social Control: Agencies and Means
- 13.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 13.6 Summary
- 13.7 Key Words
- 13.8 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 13.9 Further Readings

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### 13.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you will study about the role of rural leadership in development of villages. In addition, you will study about rural industrialization, changes in rural leadership, emerging trends in rural leadership, values and norms and the agencies of social control.

It is rightly said 'India lives in its villages'. More than 70 per cent population lives in rural area. There is more pressure on land, with reference to employment. At present over fifty percent of the people in rural areas live below the poverty line.

In developing countries like India, where majority of the population lives in rural areas and is dependent on agriculture for its livelihood and where problems like poverty, unemployment, social and economic inequality exist more pronouncedly in the countryside, the role of public development administration in rural transformation is vital. In India, rural transformation has been one of the most spectacular features during the post independence period. The process generally implies a change for the overall betterment of rural conditions.

Rural leadership creates a very strong link between the policy makers, government administration and the society, as well the rural masses. Many researches were aimed at identifying new and emerging leadership trends in the rural Indian society. Sociologists have examined the impact and influence of a few selected social, educational and cultural developments in area of rural leadership.

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### 13.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Examine the significance of leadership training programmes
- Analyse the role of Panchayati Raj in rural development
- Discuss the emerging patterns of rural leadership
- List the characteristics of attitudes and beliefs
- State the types of social control
- Explain the agencies of social control

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### 13.2 POWER STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP PATTERN: BASES, FUNCTIONS AND EMERGING TRENDS

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There are several projects and programmes being operated by the government, to evaluate the effect of a leadership training programmes in many Indian states, with the help of state governments, Department of Panchayati Raj, attitude of the village people towards female leadership, and effectiveness of female leadership in rural areas and decision-making. These programmes seek to design and evaluate additional negotiation training module to further empower female leadership and equip new leaders by strengthening their working efficiency for better leadership and improve the perception of women as good leaders.

The key objectives of these programmes are limited to:

- Improvement process and quality of decision-making
- Efficiency in implementation of public programmes at the village level, including the quality and quantity of public goods provided and villagers' reported satisfaction with public programmes
- Creating a good image of women as leaders
- Better provision of goods preferred specifically by women
- Intervention at ground level

Development is an overall outcome of multiple factors promoting and encouraging change. It is, therefore, affected by the overall situation which exists wherever development is sought. In fact, if viewed with a broad (and perhaps more realistic) perspective, development administration does not include only those institutions which are working directly for it, rather Regulatory Administration, Management for Infrastructure Institution and Agriculture Administration are also integral parts of it. Relatively, the authoritative functioning of the *Patwari* and the police, have been relatively less successful in the field of electrification, transportation and communication, mutual trust and distrust relationship between

the co-operative agriculture and administration functionaries (the VEW and the co-operative societies) and the people itself is a matter of concern in the field of development administration. During the 1950s and 1960s, development administration was influenced by the early theoretical approaches to development. Administration believed that:

- Development was desirable
- Development could be planned, directed, and controlled by public agencies
- Poverty could be eliminated by improving the quality of public goods and services
- Obstacles to development could be overcome

Development and administration were primarily viewed as economic, with little concern for equitable distribution of social benefits.

Today, development administration is less bound to Western approaches of development. The focus is an indigenous development that is sustainable and that meets the basic needs of the people. During the British rule in India, the system of administration was involved in keeping up with needs of the rules. However, it did not take the needs of development administration into consideration, with the results that it could not be established as an agent of socio-economic change. With the advent of independence, when the nature and size of bureaucracy underwent a noticeable turn, the massive onus of development which was so far conjoined merely with non-development duties like maintaining law and order or collecting revenues from the people. While viewing the problem from this angle, one wonders whether a colonial system of administration, which came into existence for the purpose of carrying out non-development work, was capable of shouldering the responsibility of organizing and executing various programmes connected with development of rural leadership and projects by imbibing the spirit of democratic values and mobilization.

### **Change in Castes, Ethnic Group and Major Occupation**

One of the important elements of the Indian social structure is the caste system. This system has also put restrictions on inter caste marriages and performances of religious sacraments and deeds have been defined into terms of the castes system. One of the important features of the caste system in traditional India has been its close association with occupation. Occupations have been categorized as pure and impure and these have been hierarchically grouped.

The information on castes, ethnic groups and major occupations reveals that an overwhelming majority, if respondent and belonging to different castes, is associated with agricultural activities which occupy a predominant place in the agrarian economy of the region where the last study was carried out.

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As a result of the Green Revolution in the area, the Scheduled Castes and other backward castes no more work for their landowner masters on payment in kind. This is due to the introduction of the Green Revolution as the traditional *Jajmani* system is on decline.

The striking feature of information on castes, ethnic groups and major occupations indicates that the majority of respondents are concerned with agricultural operations, one way or the other, while respondents concerned with service, carpentry, tailoring, etc., are the lowest in number. The joint family system has been a very common feature in the rural society of India. In recent decades, the phenomena of modernization and urbanization have brought out many changes in the social scene. The rapid growth of population has put unbearable strain on the agricultural sector, the main source of sustenance for the rural masses. In turn, it causes breaking of the joint family system.

### **State Intervention and Rural transformation**

Rural Development has acquired special significance in countries of the Third World. The developing countries have been faced with the task of transforming a traditional society with low levels of literacy, political experience and production. These countries have experienced with various developmental plans and strategies to restructure and transform the traditional social structure, in conformity with particular politico-economic goals. India, after independence, has launched vast programmes of planned changes encompassing social, economic and political processes. Among the programmes of rural research-construction, the Community development and Panchayati Raj Institutions have achieved special impetus.

The main focus of many researchers was to see the extent to which the state as an institution has been able to influence and alter the traditional social structure of the village community and has led to the emergence of a new pattern of economic and political relationship among different groups in the society. For socioeconomic uplift of Indian villages, the union and state governments have launched a number of programmes and projects since 1947. Since independence, the states in India have played a vital role in the process of rural transformation.

In this respect, various Community Development Programmes were launched in India in 1952. The blocks came to be established as units of development administration. The national extension service was established soon thereafter, with a view of reinforce the administrative service to tackle the problems of development and growth. There started a research for alternative programmes of rural development. The ever growing need for more food from rapidly growing population introduced the adaptation of intensive Agricultural Development programmes, high yielding variety programmes and multiple cropping programmes for increasing the production of food grains.

A large number of programmes were introduced in the fourth Five Year Plan (1966-67), which includes adaptation of the target group programmes like Small Farmer Development Agency, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labours

Development Agency, Antryodaya and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas. Besides, certain area development programmes like tribal area development programmes, whole village development programmes, etc., have also been launched.

### **Panchayati Raj and Other Programmes in Rural Areas**

With the introduction of Panchayati Raj and other programmes of rural reconstruction, both, social and political structure in contemporary India, are passing through a period of transition. Simultaneously, other trends like representation of elected people in various organizations, rising pressure for the distribution of economic benefits and facilities, close interaction between processes of economic and political development and emergence of a new class of power elites in the society have led to a shift in the rural social structure. These have very much influenced the whole process of change. This is to identify the agricultural work and to try to understand the nature and extent of social change.

Developmental programmes have been assigned to Panchayati Raj institutions. Since these institutions consist of elected members, decisions regarding development scheme and allocation of funds are taken democratically. The amount of resources being channeled through these institutions in the recent years is enormous. There is intense competition among various groups and individuals to extract maximum resource allocation after having been elected. Elections of these bodies have also been contested quite intensely with a view to get control over them. Factionalism, personnel bickering and rivalries have been reported on the basis of castes class and class based loyalties.

The recent 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution have been welcomed as focus on the political structure, rural leadership and process of rural India, their significance for the vulnerable and weaker sections of the rural society and their participation in the operation of this structure. Women being one of these vulnerable sections in the local government process have come under considerable scrutiny.

Facilities for all methods of family planning are available on a wider scale and at all levels of the health centers and hospitals of rural areas. Apart from sterilization, non-terminal methods like IUD, CC and oral pills are popularized, since a large number of young couples are giving preference to these methods. (Sixth Five Year plan, 1981-376).

Though, apparently, only developmental role has been assigned to the Panchayati Raj, but its social consequences have been such that one cannot afford to ignore their analysis. It is thus to examine as to what extent, process of development has been able to transform the traditional social structure, including the transfer of leadership. Since both the processes, namely, development and political awakening, are simultaneously operating, they are of crucial importance to analyse the social background of those groups and individuals that have been associated with these proceeds.

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### **Abolition of Zamindari System in India: A Passage for Vital Change**

Indian agriculture, at the time of independence, was predominantly feudal in character. Before independence, the system of land tenure in the district was based on Zamindari, which had given Zamindars the judicial right to landownership. Zamindars, who were mostly from the upper castes were alone owners of the properties of land. All others were their tenants, holding the right to cultivate and paying rent to them. After independence, the Zamindari Abolition Act abolished the right of intermediate level of the village land and gave proprietary right to the actual tiller of the land. The abolition of Zamindari, however, was not very successful in terms of abolishing the huge differences in the landownership amongst the land-owning and non land-owning castes. Zamindari abolition and the subsequent land reforms were no doubt radical steps to transform the traditional social structure, but they could not bring much change in the existing situation. The enforcement of land reforms legislation enacted by the state government after independence resulted in distribution of land among landless Harijans and weaker sections of the society. Thus, abolition of the Zamindari system in India has taken power from the upper class of the rural area. It played a vital role for bringing in changes in rural leadership traditions. The nature of landownership and social relations contingent on it has undergone substantial changes during the last sixty years.

### **Rural Industrialization and Change in Rural Leadership**

Industrialization has played a significant role in the development of rural areas in India. The concept of rural industrialization is a process of development of an area and also of participation by area factors and agents of growth of industries. The village and small sector industries consist of traditional village industries like Khadi, handlooms, CERI culture, handicrafts, modern small scale industries and power looms. While traditional industries are generally artisan-based, they are located mostly in the rural area and mostly provide part-time employment.

Rural industrialization cannot be regarded as a strategic substitute for other critically missing elements of the development process. It cannot replace the need for various kinds of agrarian institutional reforms, in favor of the rural poor and it cannot offset the implication of an impact of unsatisfactory performance in main sectors of the economy.

In recent economic literature and economic thinking, industrialization has been considered as a key to rapid economic development. It offers the prospect of a growing availability of many factored goods, increased employment opportunities, improved balance of payments position and greater efficiency and modernization throughout the economy. Industrialization is characterized by technological innovation and improvement in technical skills that led to higher productivity. Rural industries provide additional employment opportunities, raise production and improve economic condition in rural areas. They are labour intensive. They provide additional employment to men and women. They ensure

decentralization of economic power at the hands of few specific classes of the rural society and elimination of monopolistic exploitation of the weaker sections.

### **New Emerging Patterns of Rural Leadership**

The study of leadership has acquired considerable theoretical and methodological sophistication, compared to days when it was believed that leaders were born with particular traits and attributes. Now, leadership is viewed in the social and cultural context, in which it appears. Rightly, leadership is regarded as a function of the group of situation. Many significant contributions towards emergence and strengthening of this trend have come from sociology and anthropology.

Leadership, which is built of multi variant factors, while aiming to accomplish the group or community goals, has become an important element within the social system in which it is operating. Changes within a system naturally demand a change in structural elements like leadership. Leadership is an important function of a community's social structure in terms of controlling and influencing the behavior of others in the community. In the changing social structure from the traditional to the modern order, leadership is also prone to change.

Rural leadership plays an important role in molding the social, political and economic life of a village community. Change within the system will naturally necessitate a change in the structural elements of leadership. In the international concept, the role of leadership in community involvement in action programmes is also a responsible dynamic aspect of the community. As the social relationship depends upon the type of structure of a village, it is related to village social structure.

Social structure has been considered as an arrangement of the relation of parts to the whole, in an ordered way to represent the distributive pattern over the network of inter-personal relationship. Leadership, therefore, depends upon the type of social structure of the community. In a changing village structure, the leadership may constitute a traditional modern continuum.

For a better study of the problem, it will be appropriate to make an analysis of the existing knowledge available on leadership. Rose and Hennery, while revealing researches on leadership have drawn attention to three theories of leadership (i) Trait or the great men theory (ii) leadership as a function of the group (iii) leadership as a function of the situation, in which the group is placed. For proper understanding of the subject it has been considered important to consider all three aspects of leadership. Since, a group consists of individual members; individual personality traits make different contributions by each member of the group.

It cannot be denied that to perform the function of leadership, an individual must exhibit, as part of the personality and character, some qualities which distinguish him from other members of the group. However, leadership is regarded as a desired activity and it has been also considered as a relation between an individual and a group, built around some common interests and behavior as directed or determined by the leader.

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A leader occupies a special status in the group. He is considered to be a central figure by all group members who find in him qualities which can help members of the group to achieve the desired goals. Leadership aims at maintaining integration and continuity of the group structure. The problem highlighted by this study:

- (a) Leadership is the property of the group and
- (b) As the group structure changes, leadership would also change

In the traditional village social structure, there are certain aspects which may be considered as important for leadership, viz., sex, age, inheritance and caste. Due to the patriarchal society, leadership in north-Indian villages has been the privilege of only males. In a joint family setting, the head of the family occupies an established position, by virtue of being senior in age and more experienced than other members of the family. In addition, the headmen of the village typified the hereditary character of power which flowed from father to the son.

### **Role of Caste and Occupation in Rural Leadership**

Caste and occupation in traditional Indian villages are close to each other. Thus, caste and occupation stratification in the village structure provided leadership position, which is occupied mostly by those who enjoy a higher rank in the caste and occupational hierarchies. However, in north Indian villages, leadership based on religion and clientele system, has also been considered traditional in nature. Leadership plays an important role in forming political classes and class. Voting in the rural area is simply filled into the prevailing system.

Politics has got involved in traditional leadership. It is the caste system, which made available to the leadership structure, an ideological base for political mobilization, providing it both, a segmental organization and an identifiable system on which support could be crystallized. This leadership was forced to make concession to local opinion, articulate potential competition on traditional lines and in turn, organize castes for economic and political purposes. Three aspects of caste consist of caste councils, arbitration procedures and so on. There is the integration aspect in which the caste system not only determines the individuals' social status on the basis of the group into which he is born, but also differentiates and assigns occupational and economic rules. It thus gives a place to every individual from the highest to the lowest and makes for a high degree of identification and integration.

The power elites of different castes are dominant figures in the politics of village Panchayat and political parties. Political bosses are the mainstream of agrarian lobbies and other pressure groups, like the traditional village Panchayat, castes association, peasant organization, etc. If a social structure is based on caste, political parties cannot ignore this social reality. Leadership has become an unavoidable fact of human beings. Everyone is involved in some way in the some

kind of political system. Even in the rural society today, leadership plays a vital role in forming various pressure groups and peasant unions.

Caste in India has been employed as a factor for achieving political power. The contexts of leadership in India are determined by the caste structure. Political parties cannot ignore this social contempt. Since leadership protects caste interests, caste factors in leadership have been solidified, irrespective if there are growing confrontations and competitive roles. Leadership has become a reflection of caste and religion loyalties. The role of caste is not confined to elections alone; it is extended to the actual operation of the state apparatus. The penetration of caste in leadership has made the state apparatus biased in favor of some castes and against others. The role of caste in Indian leadership has distorted the processes of secularization in the country and it has made the state apparatus biased in favor of the castes which dominate the social structure.

Caste is employed to play an ideological role in leadership to legitimate capitalistic exploitation. The democratic political process in India is linked with the building of capitalism and the conflicts, generated by the capitalistic path of development, are diverted towards caste confrontation. Caste is projected as a reality of Indian society by the ideologues of capitalism and the exploited peasants and workers are divided through caste conflicts. The tyranny of the rich peasants over their landless agricultural labours is explained away as a caste phenomenon. Landowners belonging to the upper and middle castes employ the state apparatus to extract surplus value by oppressing landless agricultural laborers and exploitative agrarian relations are defended with the help of state functionaries. The basic activity of social exploitation is undertaken by the rural rich, by means of caste factors in leadership.

### **Group Dynamics and Factors of Rural Leadership**

Group dynamics is that division of social psychology which investigates the formation and change in structure and functions of psychological groups. In a practical sense, it is also conceived as a technique of fostering conciliation between individuals and groups regarding important issues and practices. In some villages it has been seen that there are no village leaders, but leaders of small groups or functions based on caste, kinship and inter village connections. Mr. Oscar Lewis (1954; 3-6) while studying village leaders in an Indian village found that there were not village wise leaders but leaders of factions. He observed, 'leadership in village Rampur is limited to faction leadership and is primarily of a protective and defensive nature, in which each faction or combination of factions defend their family interests.

The factions were generally known by the names of their leaders. These were organized along caste lines and were distributed as follows. The Jat factions were by far the most powerful and dominant in the political life of villages. Due to a small number and economic dependence of most of the lower castes, they did

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not have the strength to act as independent factions. They were no political groupings, nor temporary alliances of individuals to fight court cases, although some of them taken on political faction became involved in power politics. Rather, they were primarily kinship groupings which carry on important social, economic and ceremonial functions in addition to their factional struggle against one another. The inter faction relations of both, Jats and non-Jats extended across village lines.

The community, in the sense of a cohesive and united community, hardly exists and caste and kinship still form the core of social organization. Village wise leadership does not exist and the idea of positive and constructive leadership in the public interest is now only gradually beginning. There was the advantage that the leadership was spread out rather than concentrated, so village level worker could reach the faction leader of constructive work in the village. To ignore these factions, or just as bad, to admit that they exist and then forget about them would help to perpetuate them rather eliminate them. Therefore, in such villages, for constructive programmes the officials should approach through faction leaders, instead of through village headmen or *Pradhan*. The organization of leadership on a faction base provided for a much closer representation of people than is possible in the more sophisticated and monolithic type of political democracy of some western nations, based on delegated authorities. In view of this, it may be desirable to build upon the present faction organization, a sense of wider community localities. However, it has been pointed out that village Panchayats are working successfully in some villages.

As a consequence of the two world wars, urbanization and industrialization, the traditional village social order has undergone many changes. The joint family social system is being replaced by nuclear units and as a result, younger generations are assuming more responsibilities. The spread of female education has given more opportunities to women to take up important positions in village social life. The caste system now tends to shift to the class system as a result of better and newer occupational opportunities.

Political freedom further hastened the process of change. Every individual now has certain fundamental rights, such as freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of association and opportunities to his economic position, irrespective of age, sex, caste and creed. In this respect the pattern of rural leadership is changing.

The community development programmes launched in October 1952 further accelerated the process of change. These programmes which are a part of the process of modernization taking place in Indian villages, have had their influence of institutions like the cooperative society, the Panchayat and the village school, besides helping to improve agricultural production. The programmes aimed at stimulating local efforts, initiative and leadership among the village community. This leadership is to be developed through democratic methods, based on group consensus in decision-making, without any limitation of age, caste, sex or class

and open to achievement. A favourable attitude to the extent of participation in village development activities will also determine the modern orientation of a leader. The means that preferred the leader to induce in community participation for development activities are also a measure of the traditional modern dimensions of leadership.

Although as a result of development factors; economy, land reforms, irrigation facilities, electricity, improved communication and mass media, the traditional village social structure is undergoing a change, a modern social order has yet to emerge. To the extent the Indian village is traditional; leadership would continue to be on the traditional pattern. However, since change is moving towards modernism, leadership too would move in the direction of modernity. Traditional and modern leadership is not mutually exclusive of age, sex, caste or class, for traditional. Irrespective of whether a leader achieves his leadership position through heredity or achievement, the extent he desires to change the village social structure from traditional to modern order will be an important measure of modern leadership.

With reference to rural leadership and its emerging pattern, voluntary organizations have an important role. Voluntary organizations are autonomous and flexible. They are initiated by a group of like-minded people to change and transform the socioeconomic life of people, especially the weaker sections. The essential feature of voluntary organization is initiated not only to solve problems but to prevent the occurrence of problems.

A voluntary organization includes a wide range of activities like construction and maintenance of educational institutions, hospitals, inns, roads, etc., providing jobs to the needy and various economic development programmes and community services. It has an administrative structure and a duly constituted managing committee. It has definite aims and objects and programmes for fulfillment of these. It is an organization initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles without any external control.

There are various voluntary organizations whose main functions have been to provide relief as well as help when the local people get affected by flood, fires, epidemic, cyclones, earthquakes, other natural calamities. In this respect, it is the responsibility of the leader of such an organization to get resources from the state and central government. Navyuvak Mangal Dal and Ramleela Samiti, as voluntary organizations, are functioning to perform rural transformation.

Efforts are also on to introduce elements of integrated rural development of concerned communities at local levels. During colonial India, agrarian structure was headed by a class of intermediate level who oppressed and exploited the mass of peasantry. There was neither security of tenancy nor alternative livelihood. Therefore peasants showed their powerful urges in the form of movements to transform the agrarian structure. Later on they were organized by political parties and people like Baba Ramchandra and Swami Sahajanand. They took interest in rural leadership and rural development. After the Green Revolution, when the

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Indian agrarian society entered a phase of rapid capitalistic transformation of agriculture, the peasant movement, led by rich peasants was mainly launched for either infrastructural facilities or monetary demands, or for support prices of agricultural products. The other major area of peasant organization leadership demanded lowering down of the cost of production. This required subsidized rates of canal irrigation, electricity, fertilizers, etc.

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### 13.3 VALUES AND NORMS

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An attitude is a state of mind or feeling with regard to some matter. It can be related to belief, which is the psychological state in which an individual holds a proposition or premise to be true.

Characteristics of attitudes and beliefs include the following:

- They are difficult to measure
- They are indicated by behaviour, reactions to individual situations and social values
- They may create inflexibility and stereotypes based on inconsistencies, incorrect assumptions or other false data
- They are formed from the continuous process of socialization
- They can be positive or negative
- Once formed, an attitude or belief cannot easily be changed; however, they may be affected by age, position and education

Values determine our attitude, behavior and our course of action. Common examples of values include giving equal rights to all people and treating everybody with respect and dignity. We tend to avoid situations that do not live up to our values, and in certain situations, we may even protest.

Certain values may be common to all individuals. Those are known as objective values and they may include the desire to seek personal well-being and avoid pain. Other values may be subjective, such as those shaped by one's religion, ideology, society and sense of aesthetics. These values are relative in nature, and what may be ethical to one may be unethical to another person.

Cultural values are largely shared by all members of a particular group. This group could be a nation, a religion, or even sub-cultures within a particular society. An example of difference in cultural values lies in the way women are treated in western cultures as opposed to the way they are treated in more conservative eastern cultures.

Values can often change over time. In India, especially in urban areas, we can see this happening in front of our eyes, as more groups and communities now share rights and dignities that were previously denied to them. At the same, there has also been a shift in values towards greater material consumption at the expense of altruism.

One's values are shaped by what one considers to be ethical and moral. Thus, it is due to one's values that one may refrain from committing criminal acts or hurting other people. At a more personal level, one's values can also determine how one interacts with others, be it at home, at work or in other everyday situations.

Social norms are the accepted modes of behaviour within a group or society and can be defined as 'the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours'. These rules may be explicit or implicit. They have also been described as the 'customary rules of behavior that coordinate our interactions with others.'

A great share of norms is dependent on body language and non-verbal communication. Norms can change in time and also across social classes and ethnic groups. For instance, dress, speech or behaviour that is acceptable in one social class may be unacceptable in another. Failure to abide by norms can lead to social mild rebuke at one extreme to ostracism social ostracism at the other.

Cultural norms are learnt through the process of growing up and socialization. Values are related to norms but are more global and abstract in nature. Whereas norms are rules for behaviour in certain specific situations, values identify what should be judged as good or evil.

#### **Check Your Progress**

1. When were the Community Development Programmes launched in India and what was its main objective?
2. What were the implications of enacting the Zamindari Abolition Act?
3. What is a voluntary organization?
4. Define social norms.

### **13.4 SOCIAL CONTROL: AGENCIES AND MEANS**

Maclver defines social control as the way by which a social order sticks together, maintains itself, and how it operates as a whole. Mannheim deems social control to be the sum total of the methods through which society attempts to influence human behaviour in order to maintain a certain order.

The influence of social control may be exerted through channels such as public opinion, social suggestion, coercion, religion, etc., among other methods. The society exerts the influence on the individual, which is a better and effective exercise than one individual having to do it. This social group may be the state, the family or the trade union, etc. The success of the influence however depends on different factors. A family, for instance, may sometimes exert better influence than a church or a state.

Social control is a vital aspect of a person's socialization process. All members of a society have to follow a set of rules and norms. Deviation from these rules can lead to punishment. Social control encourages conformity. Its two

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most common forms are formal and informal controls. Formal control is exercised by authorized agents including police, military, etc. It is often carried out as the last resort where discipline is not possible through informal social control. Informal control is exercised by a society without stating any obvious laws or rules. This control is expressed through norms and established customs. Traditional societies use social control culture to help in establishing social order.

### Types of Social Control

Formal control is law as statutes, regulations and rules against deviant behaviour. For instance, laws like prohibition of murder apply to everyone in the society. Some laws are less stringent, such as fishing regulations that are applicable to certain groups. Corporate laws govern social institutions. Formal control is also exercised through law enforcement mechanisms. Formal sanctions like fines and imprisonment are also mechanisms of social control.

Sarcasm, criticism, ridicule, etc., are some informal sanctions. Social discrimination and exclusion are used as informal control at extreme deviant cases. Severity and nature of informal control mechanisms vary across individuals, groups, and societies. Informal control is prevalent in small-group settings like family, friends, neighborhood, work group, etc.

According to sociologist Edward A. Ross, social control comprises ‘the mechanisms by which society exercises its dominion over its component individuals and enforces conformity to its norms, i.e. its values.’

Social control as a field of study became popular in the 20th century. Sociologists have identified two types of social control, formal and informal. **Formal social control** is exercised through the law in the form of rules and regulations against deviant behaviour. Formal social control is generally exercised by the government, but is also found in corporate organizations.

**Informal social control** is exercised through customs, norms and mores that are generally internalized by individuals. These social controls are not laid out in a strict framework as the law or rules and regulations and Ross believes that such belief systems act as a greater form of control than laws laid out by the government.

Failure on the part of an individual to conform to informal control does not lead to fines or imprisonment, but rather criticism, shaming and ridicule and in extreme cases exclusion and discrimination.

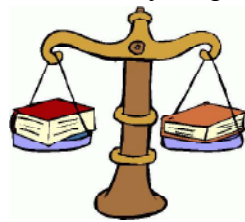
In traditional societies, informal controls such as religion and custom may be more important in maintaining conformity, whereas in others, such as the former Soviet Union, formal social control played a bigger role.

### Agencies of Social Control

Social control is carried out through series of agencies, many of which are discussed below as both formal and informal agencies of control. The regular channels of social control are as follows:

## Law

Law constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which social control is enacted. Simple societies are characterized by homogeneity among individuals and operation of informal social control. However, when societies grew in size and complexity, they were compelled to formulate rules and regulations which defined certain behaviour patterns. Due to increased differentiation and division of labour, there has been interdependence between different individuals who portray heterogeneous relations. In a society that is marked by extreme differentiation, the old informal means of control like folkways, mores, etc., seem to be insufficient to exercise control. So there is a need to regulate individual behaviour by formulating a set of common laws which are backed by the political machinery of the state.



For Black (1976), law is ‘governmental social control’, being the rules and processes that the state uses to intervene in social conflicts between both organized and individual interests. Law is a body of rules that is enacted by legally authorized bodies and enforced by authorized agencies. It is enforced with the help of the police, the court and even the armed forces. Law is an instrument of control that eliminates and suppresses the homicidal activities of individuals. It also motivates individuals to pay attention to the rights of others and act in cooperation with others. Law has become the most pervasive and indispensable agency of social control in the contemporary society.

## Education

Apart from law, education is also an important agency of social control. Durkheim conceived of education as socialization of the younger generation. He also stated that ‘it is actually a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting’. Education does not restrict itself only to the transfer of a way of life. In modern times, a large section of it is dedicated to communicate empirical knowledge. Through education, the new generation learns about the social norms and about the penalties that can be awarded for violating them. Education converts social control into self-control. In the absence of a well-organized educational system, social control would remain merely as an arbitrary pressure, which may not last long.



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## Coercion

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Coercion is the practice of attaining a specific goal by using compulsion or power. Whenever people are refrained from doing a particular work, whenever limits are imposed on the range of their choices through the use of force, or through threat of its consequences, it may be defined as coercion. This emerges as the final method to achieve social control when every other method fails. State is the only association which is empowered to use coercion in social control. No other association is vested with this power. State resorts to coercion to combat anti-social tendencies. Coercion may or may not be of a physical nature. Physical coercion can also comprise of bodily harm, captivity or capital punishment. Physical coercion is the most degrading means of social control and societies should avoid using it unless it becomes a necessity. Non-violent coercion, on the other hand, consists of strike, boycott or non-cooperation.



Human experience has revealed that coercion or force is necessary as a guarantee of political laws. Its service is best rendered when it is used to the minimum. Where a common rule is considered necessary or beneficial for the common good, some degree of compulsion is involved. Hence force becomes necessary for common rule. But only when the use of force is limited, it becomes subjugated to the liberties of the people.

Informal means of social control are exercised by informal institutions like family, peer group, neighborhood, etc. These are discussed below:



*Figure 13.1 The Law and Police Forces Play an Active Role in Enforcing Social Control*

## Folkways

Folkways are informal means of social control in the sense that they are some customary norms which individuals conform to. These are actually ways of thinking, feeling and acting in a human group that has certain prescribed modes of conduct. William Graham Sumner (1906), in his book *Folkways: A Study of Mores, Manners, Customs and Morals*, defined folkways as ‘folkways are a societal force’. They are instinctive in nature. The folkways simultaneously serve every need of life. In one group, they are consistent and global, crucial and constant. As time passes by, folkways become increasingly random, constructive and inevitable. The process of producing folkways comprises of activities that are repeated continuously, when faced with the same need. It inculcates habits in the individuals and customs in the group. Through the use of habit and custom, every individual within its domain feels the stress. Thus, it emerges as a force of the society. Folkways are not a creation of human purpose or wit. They are like products of natural forces which men, unconsciously set in operation and are handed down by tradition. As a consequence of this, the life of entire mankind, in all ages and stages of culture, is mainly governed by a large collection of folkways. These folkways are transferred from the primitive races and undergo changes by human philosophy, ethics and religion.



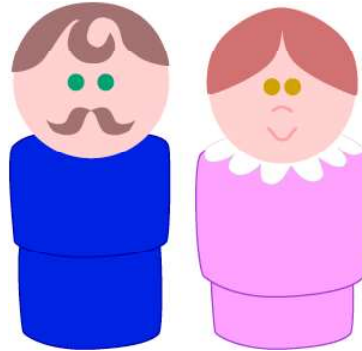
## Mores

Mores are established practices of the society rather than written laws. They are basically in the form of social regulations and have a significant impact on social conduct. Sumner used the concept of mores for folkways which were very significant to groups and highly important for their welfare. According to Sumner, mores comprise of popular usages and traditions when they include a judgment that they are conducive to social welfare and when they exert coercion on the individual to conform to them. They are not coordinated by any authority. Sumner believed that mores represent the living character of the group. They are always considered right by the people who share them. Mores help an individual in realizing that living in a community or a group is possible only when one conforms to the norms of that community or group. A distinction is always made between folkways and mores. Sumner says that when folkways work on the ideology of correct

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living and are directed to the wellbeing of life, then they are converted to mores. Thus, in this context, it can be said that mores are important means of social control. They determine much of our individual behaviour, such that they compel behaviour and also forbid it. In a society, many mores like monogamy, democracy, prohibition, etc., operate. These mores also identify an individual with a group and help in maintaining social bonds. Moreover, violations of these mores entail some punishment in the form of penalties. Therefore mores are considered one of the strongest means of informal social control.



**Customs**

Custom is also an informal means of social control. According to Kingsley Davis, customs refer primarily to practices that have been often repeated by a multitude of generations. These practices tend to be followed simply because they have been followed in the past. The socially accredited ways of acting are the customs of the society. Many of our daily activities are regulated by customs. Custom is a broader term that comprises of both, folkways and mores. Customs are social habits, which through repetition become the basis of an order of social behaviour.



Customs are long established habits and usages of people. Whenever there is a widespread habit, there is a corresponding custom as well. According to Lundberg, they are folkways that persist over relatively long periods of time. Thus, they attain a degree of formal recognition and are passed down from one generation to another. A particular characteristic of custom is that it exists only as a social relationship and an external sanction for the individual. Customs not only regulate

social life but also bind it together. Customs guide human behaviour and enlighten man in social life.

Customs are conformed to most unconsciously. Man learns about them from early years of socialization and diligently follows them. They are rarely opposed and mostly adhered to. Customs form the base for collective human life and are found in almost every society. They are more influential and dominant in the primitive society rather than in modern societies. In the struggle for existence, only those societies survive which are able to evolve through customs that bind them together, assimilate their actions to the accepted standards, compel control of the purely egoistic impulses and exterminate individuals who are incapable of such control.

Custom is obeyed more spontaneously because it grows slowly. People follow similar behaviour patterns. Thus, customs play an important part in regulating our social behaviour. They determine our culture, preserve it and transmit it from one generation to the next.

### Religion

Religion implies man's faith on some supernatural power or force. According to MacIver and Page, 'religion encompasses relationships among men and also those between man and the supernatural forces. Religion regulates the activities of people in its own way. It regulates human conduct through religious code. Religion fulfils social, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of human beings. Religion conserves the norms and values of life through agencies like family, church and school. Religion inculcates the values of life in the minds of growing children. Religion has its own methods to deal with those individuals who violate religious norms and conduct. Various religious institutions like churches, temples and monasteries also help to control the disobedient. Religion has its own ways and means to re-integrate people into a social group. Moreover, religious sanctions are widely used to support ethical codes and moral practices.



**Family:** Family is an important agency of social control. It is the first place where a person is socialized. He learns methods of living, behaviour patterns, convention, etc., from the family. He is taught to obey social control.

**Neighbourhood:** This is a simple and specific part of the community. It has the feeling of a local unit. Elder members of the neighborhood keep modes alive and enforce them in the society.

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**Church:** This was once a very powerful agency of social control. The priests of the church were held in high esteem. Its authority was such that nobody could argue its decisions. It even has the power to dethrone kings.

**Public opinion:** In the present democratic age, public opinion is important. The state controls the public's behaviour through the use of public opinion.

**Propaganda:** This is a systematic attempt by individuals to control the attitudes of people through suggestions, and their actions.

### Check Your Progress

5. Name the two types of social control.
6. How does law function as an efficient mechanism of social control?

## 13.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. The Community Development Programmes were launched in India in 1952. The main objective of these programmes was to bring about socio-economic development of the villages through participation of people themselves.
2. The Zamindari Abolition Act abolished the right of intermediate level of the village land and gave proprietary right to the actual tiller of the land. The abolition of Zamindari, however, was not very successful in terms of abolishing the huge differences in the landownership amongst the land-owning and non-land-owning castes.
3. A voluntary organization includes a wide range of activities like construction and maintenance of educational institutions, hospitals, inns, roads, etc., providing jobs to the needy and various economic development programmes and community services. It has an administrative structure and a duly constituted managing committee. It is an organization initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles without any external control.
4. Social norms are the accepted modes of behaviour within a group or society.
5. The two types of social control are formal and informal.
6. Law constitutes one of the primary mechanisms through which social control is enacted. Due to increased differentiation and division of labour, there has been interdependence between different individuals who portray heterogeneous relations. In a society that is marked by extreme differentiation, the old informal means of control like folkways, mores, etc., seem to be insufficient to exercise control. So there is a need to regulate individual behaviour by formulating a set of common laws which are backed by the political machinery of the state.

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## 13.6 SUMMARY

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- It is rightly said ‘India lives in its villages’. More than 70 per cent population lives in rural area. There is more pressure on land, with reference to employment. At present over fifty percent of the people in rural areas live below the poverty line.
- Rural leadership creates a very strong link between the policy makers, government administration and the society, as well the rural masses.
- Development is an overall outcome of multiple factors promoting and encouraging change. It is, therefore, affected by the overall situation which exists wherever development is sought.
- During the 1950s and 1960s, development administration was influenced by the early theoretical approaches to development.
- One of the important elements of the Indian social structure is the caste system. This system has also put restrictions on inter caste marriages and performances of religious sacraments and deeds have been defined into terms of the castes system.
- As a result of the Green Revolution in the area, the Scheduled Castes and other backward castes no more work for their landowner masters on payment in kind.
- With the introduction of Panchayati Raj and other programmes of rural reconstruction, both, social and political structure in contemporary India, are passing through a period of transition.
- Indian agriculture, at the time of independence, was predominantly feudal in character. Before independence, the system of land tenure in the district was based on Zamindari, which had given Zamindars the judicial right to landownership.
- Industrialization has played a significant role in the development of rural areas in India. The concept of rural industrialization is a process of development of an area and also of participation by area factors and agents of growth of industries.
- Rural industrialization cannot be regarded as a strategic substitute for other critically missing elements of the development process.
- Leadership is an important function of a community’s social structure in terms of controlling and influencing the behavior of others in the community. In the changing social structure from the traditional to the modern order, leadership is also prone to change.
- Caste and occupation in traditional Indian villages are close to each other. Thus, caste and occupation stratification in the village structure provided

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leadership position, which is occupied mostly by those who enjoy a higher rank in the caste and occupational hierarchies.

- Caste is employed to play an ideological role in leadership to legitimate capitalistic exploitation.
- Group dynamics is that division of social psychology which investigates the formation and change in structure and functions of psychological groups.
- The community, in the sense of a cohesive and united community, hardly exists and caste and kinship still form the core of social organization.
- A voluntary organization includes a wide range of activities like construction and maintenance of educational institutions, hospitals, inns, roads, etc., providing jobs to the needy and various economic development programmes and community services.
- An attitude is a state of mind or feeling with regard to some matter. It can be related to belief, which is the psychological state in which an individual holds a proposition or premise to be true.
- Cultural norms are learnt through the process of growing up and socialization. Values are related to norms but are more global and abstract in nature.
- The influence of social control may be exerted through channels such as public opinion, social suggestion, coercion, religion, etc., among other methods.
- Formal control is law as statutes, regulations and rules against deviant behaviour. For instance, laws like prohibition of murder apply to everyone in the society.
- Social control as a field of study became popular in the 20th century. Sociologists have identified two types of social control, formal and informal.
- Social control is carried out through series of agencies, many of which are discussed below as both formal and informal agencies of control.

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### 13.7 KEY WORDS

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- **Green revolution:** It was started in 1965 with the first introduction of High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds in Indian agriculture. This was combined with better and efficient irrigation and the correct use of fertilizers to boost the crop.
- **Coercion:** It implies the use of force to persuade someone to do something that they are unwilling to do.
- **Propaganda:** It is the spreading of information in support of a cause.

- **Mores:** These are established practices of the society rather than written laws.
- **Values:** These denote a person's or society's beliefs about good behaviour.

*Pattern and Structure*

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## 13.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the changes introduced by the administration of Panchayati Raj in the Indian states.
2. What is the role of rural leadership in transforming the life of the village community?
3. What are the differences between values and norms?
4. List the characteristics of attitudes and beliefs.
5. Define social control.
6. What is the difference between formal and informal social control?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. How does the government evaluate the effect of leadership training programmes launched in the Indian states?
2. 'Rural development has acquired special significance in countries of the Third World.' Do you agree with the statement? Give reasons for your answer.
3. Explain the emerging patterns of rural leadership.
4. Analyse the role of caste and occupation in rural leadership.
5. Discuss the agencies of social control.

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## 13.9 FURTHER READINGS

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**BLOCK - V**  
**URBAN COMMUNITY: BASIC**  
**CHARACTERISTICS AND FEATURES**

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## UNIT 14 URBAN COMMUNITY

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**Structure**

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Characteristics of Urban Community
  - 14.2.1 Rural–Urban Continuum and Contrast
- 14.3 Urbanism and Urbanization
  - 14.3.1 Pattern of Urbanization during the British Rule
  - 14.3.2 Features of Urban Society
  - 14.3.3 Re-urbanization
  - 14.3.4 Causes of Urbanization
- 14.4 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions
- 14.5 Summary
- 14.6 Key Words
- 14.7 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 14.8 Further Readings

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### 14.0 INTRODUCTION

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Urbanization is the process of increase in size and density of population in cities because of migration from rural areas. But this meaning presupposes the existence of cities. Had there been no cities, the process of urbanization would have meant the initial movement of people from rural areas to a new habitation around a modern industry. Thus, it can be said that the genesis of urbanization lies in the process of industrialization, i.e., the setting up of modern factories and workshops to manufacture various types of goods. The most important characteristic of urbanization is large population. The causes that lead to urbanization are industrialization, modernization and better employment opportunities. In this unit, you will study about the characteristics of urban community, concept of urbanism and urbanization.

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### 14.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the characteristics of urban community
- Define urbanism and urbanization
- Explain rural-urban differences and continuum

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## 14.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF URBAN COMMUNITY

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### NOTES

Just as it was difficult to define a village or rural society, it is equally difficult to define the word ‘urban’ or the terms ‘urban society’ and ‘urban community’. An urban area may be an area that has a very high density of population. But density of population alone cannot be the defining feature. While the distinction between ‘rural’ and ‘urban’ is comprehensible to everybody, it is not easy to define the terms scientifically.

Generally speaking, an urban community is large, dense and heterogeneous. It can also be said to be predominantly occupied in the industrial and service sectors. Urban growth is a recent phenomenon and till 1850, the urban population in the world was estimated to be only 2 per cent of the global population.

Ancient India did have a few cities, which were important centers of pilgrimage and governance. Ayodhya, Pataliputra, Magadha, etc. were some of these cities. Notwithstanding this fact, urbanization in India is also a recent phenomenon. Prior to independence, apart from the cities of ancient times, India had a few cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi. The first three were important cities for the British rulers as they had ports, which facilitated trade and commerce. After Independence, with the advent of planned economic development, urbanization gathered pace in India. The reason for this was the Government’s thrust on industrial growth and the resultant development of industrial towns. Thus, industrialization led to urbanization in independent India. Besides industrial towns and cities, urban areas have come up in the shape of state capitals, district headquarters and educational centers. Thus, while Rourkela (Orissa) and Bokaro (Jharkhand) are industrial towns, Bhubaneshwar (Orissa) and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh) are capital cities. Similarly, Pune and Kota are urban areas that are recognized as centers of educational excellence.

As per the provisional figures of Census 2011, the share of urban population in India has gone up to 31 per cent from 17 per cent in 1951. Thus, as stated earlier, urbanization has taken place in a major way after the independence of the country.

The Census of India defines urban area as ‘all places with a Municipality, Corporation, Cantonment Board, Notified town area committee, etc., and all other places satisfying the following criteria:

- Having a minimum population of 5,000
- At least 75 per cent of the male main workers being engaged in non-agricultural work
- Having a density of population of at least 400 per square kms.

The characteristics of urban society in India are as follows:

- **Anonymity:** Urban areas are large and have very high population. Besides, the communities do not reside in close proximity. In such circumstances, anonymity of individuals and urban communities becomes a way of life.

Unlike villages, where everyone knows each other, people in towns and cities are very impersonal and know only very few people by name. Given the high population and the hectic pace of life in Indian cities and towns, it is not possible to know each other personally.

- o Anonymity refers to loss of identity in a city teeming with millions. Many urbanites live in a social void or vacuum in which institutional norms are not effective in controlling or regulating their social behaviour. Although they are aware of the existence of many institutional organizations and many people around them, they do not feel a sense of belongingness to any one group or community. Socially, they are poor in the midst of plenty.
- **Social heterogeneity:** Compared to rural society, the urban society in India is far more heterogeneous. People from diverse backgrounds with great racial, cultural and educational variations live together in the cities and towns. The urban society in India is a melting pot for all cultures and traditions and people learn about each other in this setting. This society has thrived by recognizing and rewarding individual differences. The personal traits and the ideas of the members of the urban society are completely different from those of their rural counterparts.
- **Social distance:** Due to anonymity and heterogeneity, the urban dweller becomes lonely and stays removed from other persons. All social interactions are routine, mechanical and impersonal. There is no social cohesiveness between one another. Rather, there is a great deal of social distance amongst the members of the urban community.
- **Homelessness:** The housing problem in Indian cities is so acute that many people from the lower class of income do not get a roof above their heads. They spend their nights in railway stations, on footpaths or under the flyovers or bridges. This homelessness is a very disturbing feature of our urban society and is a violation of basic human rights. Even the middle class families do not get homes of their choice. They reside in small and badly located houses, which do not provide the children of such families with any space to play.
- **Class extremes:** Indian cities are characterized by inhabitants of all classes. The richest persons of the country like Mukesh Ambani, Sachin Tendulkar, Aamir Khan, etc. cohabit with the poorest of the poor in a city like Mumbai. Thus, urban society is replete with class extremities. Such extremities have their own problems and can create a sense of dejection in the minds of the poor people. Sometimes, this leads them to the door of crime in lure of easy money.
- **Hectic pace of life:** Life is very fast-paced and hectic in the urban areas and is completely different from the languid pace of rural life. People are always in a hurry to do their work so that they accomplish their targets and get their rewards. This endless run eventually affects their health and creates a great deal of tension in their personal lives.

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- **Materialism:** The urban community of India is greatly focused upon material acquisitions and wealth accumulation. An individual’s worth is expressed in terms of his material possessions. There is a lot of conspicuous consumption and an urban Indian feels happy to lead a luxurious lifestyle.
- **Secularism:** The urban community is more secular than its rural counterparts. Religious, caste and community feelings take a back seat as people are more concerned about working and earning a good livelihood. Interactions amongst people of different castes and communities at workplaces force them to adopt a more secular outlook.

**14.2.1 Rural–Urban Continuum and Contrast**

While studying about the rural and urban society, it is imperative for us to know about the concepts of rural–urban continuum and rural–urban contrast. Briefly put, while the first analyses the similarities between rural and urban areas, the second does so about the differences.

**Rural–urban continuum**

Both rural and urban societies are part of the same human society and do share a lot of features of each other. There is no clear demarcation between the two. There is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and the country begins. It is very difficult to actually distinguish between the two societies in the geographical realm. While theoretically we talk about the two societies, the dichotomy between the two is not based upon scientific principles.

Since, no concrete demarcation can be drawn between the ‘rural’ and the ‘urban’, sociologists take recourse to the concept of rural–urban continuum. The bottom line of the concept is that rural and urban societies do not exist in water tight compartments but do have a lot in common. They share lifestyles, value systems, traditional festivals and customs because they, ultimately, belong to the same society. The difference between them is usually of degree rather than of kind. They are not mutually exclusive.

The differences between them are getting further blurred with the advent of modernization and industrialization. Countries where these processes have become universal are good examples of similarities between rural and urban areas. Universal modern education, modern means of transportation, access to television and computers, etc. have radically changed the lifestyle in rural areas and have reduced the differences that were earlier visible between rural and urban areas. Countries like India still have huge differences between these two areas because of poverty and illiteracy continuing to dominate the rural landscape (Figure 4.1).



**Fig. 14.1** The Rural–Urban Continuum

The extreme left depicts a remote village and the extreme right a metropolitan city. Such sharp differences do not usually exist between villages and cities and, in reality, rural and urban areas can exist at any point on the above line or continuum. Thus, there is no clear cut demarcation and the difference can be seen to be one of degree and not kind.

The fringe at the centre of the diagram is an interesting concept. It is also known as the rural–urban fringe. It is some sort of an overlapping geographical area between a city and a rural area. The cities have expanded and penetrated into rural areas. This is due to haphazard and unplanned growth of the cities. As one moves out of cities, one can see some residential colonies, a few factories, open sheds storing marble, timber or other construction material, automobile showrooms, petrol/diesel filling stations, etc. In between these structures, one can see large tracts of agricultural fields. These areas are known as the rural–urban fringe. The fringe is defined as an area of mixed urban and rural land users between the point where city services cease to be available and the point where agricultural land users predominate.

### **Rural–urban contrast**

There is a different school of thought among sociologists, which believes that a strong dichotomy exists between rural and urban areas. Notwithstanding the wide acceptability of the concept of rural–urban continuum, this group believes in the other concept, i.e., rural–urban contrast. This concept seeks to highlight the differences between the rural and urban areas and some of these differences are as follows:

- **Differences in social organization:** The systems of family and marriage are quite different. While joint families and arranged marriages are the order of the day in rural areas, urban areas see a lot of nuclear families and love marriages. Besides, the status of women is higher in urban areas.
- **Differences in social relationship and interaction:** Rural society exhibits greater cooperation and fellow feeling amongst individuals whereas; in urban areas people are very self-centered. While rural areas have personal relationships, urban areas have impersonal ones.
- **Homogeneity vis-à-vis heterogeneity:** Villages are small in size and, therefore, the inhabitants develop many identical characteristics due to physical proximity. Cities are much bigger in size and there is a great deal of heterogeneity.
- **A difference in economic life:** Agriculture is the predominant economic feature of the rural society. It results in low income and, consequently, low standard of living. On the other hand, there is a great deal of variety in the economic life of the urban society. Most people are engaged in industries or pursue their own business. The standard of living of the urban people is higher.

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- **Differences in cultural life:** Rural culture is relatively static and is dominated by traditions and age-old customs. The urban areas have a dynamic culture and less room for superstitious beliefs.
- **Differences in social mobility:** Since hierarchy in the rural society is based upon the caste system in a country like India, social mobility in the rural society is almost impossible. In other countries, where hierarchy is based upon class, social mobility in rural areas is relatively easier. However, it is in the urban areas that social mobility does take place most easily as the people have the freedom to choose their occupation and move up in life.
- **Differences in social change:** The process of social change in rural areas is very slow. The reasons for this are predominance of traditional thinking and conservatism, less innovation and competition and a high degree of stability. On the contrary, urban areas see rapid social changes due to the influence of modernization and westernization.
- **Differences in social control:** In rural societies, primary institutions like the family, caste, neighbourhood, etc. exercise a great deal of control on the behaviour of individuals. In contrast, there is hardly any control on the members of the urban society. A man in an urban society is free from all primary controls.

### Check Your Progress

1. State any one significant characteristic of urban society in India.
2. What is the difference in social organization in rural and urban areas?

## 14.3 URBANISM AND URBANIZATION

According to Thompson Warren, 'Urbanization is the movement of people from communities concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture to other communities, generally larger, whose activities are primarily centred in government, trade manufacture or allied interests.' He observes that urbanization not only involves a movement from villages to cities but also involves a change in the attitude, values, beliefs and behaviour of the migrants.

Urbanization is universal and brings about economic development and social change. It can also be defined as a process of concentration of population in a particular territory. According to Mitchell, 'Urbanization is a process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits common to cities.'

The eminent Indian sociologist, Dr. G.S. Ghurye, has defined urbanization in a functional manner. According to him, 'urbanization means migration of people

from village to city and the effect of this movement upon the migrants and their families and upon fellowmen in the villages.’

It is important to distinguish the concept of urbanization from the concepts of urbanity and urbanism. As we have seen, urbanization is a process which refers to change in values, attitudes and beliefs of people who migrate from villages to cities and the impact of this movement on people who are left behind in the villages. Urbanity, on the other hand, is the state of the people living in an urban area which is distinct from those living in the villages. It refers to a pattern of life in terms of work, food habits and the world view of people living in the urban areas. Urbanism is characterized by a system of values, norms and attitudes towards the interpersonal relations in terms of individualism and anonymity.

Evidence of urbanization in India is available from the Harappan times and throughout the history of India. The cities of Mohenjodaro and Harappa (presently in Pakistan) were established in the Indus river valley way back in 2,500 BC. It has been pointed out by archaeologists that urbanization in Harappa could be ascertained from archaeological findings of brick technology, agriculture and irrigation facilities.

Other examples of urbanization in the ancient period of Indian history are the cities of Pataliputra (Patna) and Vaishali during the Magadh rule around 300 BC. In the medieval period of Indian history, cities like Kannauj, Delhi, Agra, Daulatabad, Hyderabad, etc. had acquired importance.

With the advent of the British colonialism from the seventeenth century onwards, there was a growth of urban centres like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Except Delhi, all the other urban centres were port cities and facilitated trade and commerce undertaken by the British rulers.

#### **14.3.1 Pattern of Urbanization during the British Rule**

During the nineteenth century, when the British firmly established themselves politically in India, urbanization in India entered a different phase. Cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras evolved from mere trading centres to political centres. This period also saw rapid technological advancements, new modes of transport and communication, emergence of new economic institutions, etc. All this made the process of urbanization quicker and smoother.

While urban centres gained in prosperity, the rural areas of India became neglected. Cottage industries and rural artisans suffered a lot because of the exploitative economic policies of the British. This forced the rural artisans and other workers to migrate to cities in search of wage employment. Thus, it can be said that the process of urbanization strengthened the cities at the expense of the villages.

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With the spread of education in these urban centres, the educated sections joined the bureaucracy or took up jobs as teachers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc. They became the intelligentsia and the elites of the Indian society and aligned their world view with the western world. They also brought about new political and economic ideas.

The new process of urbanization provided ample scope for occupational and social mobility and slowly broke the stranglehold of the caste system. This process, which got a boost during the nineteenth century, gathered greater momentum in the twentieth century.

From the beginning of the twentieth century and especially after independence, urbanization in India has taken place at a fast pace. The modern Indian cities have become centres of economic, political, administrative and cultural power. The pattern of urbanization in the twentieth century can be understood in terms of its demographic, spatial, economic and socio-cultural aspects.

### Demographic aspect

Population has always been an important aspect of urbanization in India. The Indian population growth exploded in the twentieth century and, as a result, urban population also grew rapidly. The share of urban population in India has grown from 10.8 per cent in 1901 to 31 per cent in 2011. The steady growth in urban population over the last 110 years has been partly due to rapid economic development in the cities and towns and partly due to the slow agricultural growth in the rural areas.

### Spatial aspect

The Indian urban scenario has witnessed a lot of spatial disparities. These disparities are the result of regional disparities, imbalanced concentration of population in certain areas and changes in the definition of urban areas in the census. These disparities can be observed from the following facts:

- Increase and decrease in the number of towns and cities due to changes in the definition of urban areas
- Variation of urbanization amongst different states with urban domination in states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu
- Concentration of urban population in the big cities with the population in such cities growing much faster than in other smaller towns
- Growth of metropolitan cities with population of more than one million

It is important to know about the following two concepts while talking about the spatial aspect of urbanization in India:

- **Over-urbanization:** Cities and towns do not have an unlimited capacity to accommodate the growing population and providing them with civic amenities,

medical facilities, schools, etc. Thus, when the population of a city goes beyond a certain limit, the administration of that city fails to provide its citizens with the requisite facilities. It is at this juncture that a city is said to have become over-urbanized. Cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata are examples of such over-urbanization.

- **Sub-urbanization:** When cities and towns get over populated, they expand beyond their boundaries and take the adjoining rural areas within their fold. This phenomenon is known as sub-urbanization. Thus, sub-urbanization refers to the urbanization of rural areas around the towns and cities and it is characterized by the following features:
  - o A sharp increase in the urban uses of land
  - o Inclusion of the surrounding areas within the municipal limits of the towns and cities
  - o Intensive communication of all types between the town or city and its surrounding areas

### **Economic aspect**

Urbanization is both a cause and a consequence of economic development. It is more of a consequence because economic development entails a huge movement of labour and other inputs from the rural areas to the towns and cities. The National Commission on Urbanization of India recognizes the importance of the Indian cities and towns. It considers urbanization to be a catalyst for economic development.

When we look at the various cities in India, we see that some have come up at places where there was no habitation at all. One of the earliest steel cities in India was Jamshedpur. It was the result of the setting up of the Tata Steel Plant, which has provided employment to members of the Santhal tribe that stayed nearby. Apart from Jamshedpur, three more steel cities also emerged after independence. They were Rourkela in Orissa, Bhilai in Chattisgarh and Durgapur in West Bengal. These steel cities and steel factories completely modified the whole socio-economic scenario of that area. They progressed from being backward areas to cosmopolitan and prosperous urban centres. Thus, you see the important and crucial role played by industries in urbanizing India.

### **14.3.2 Features of Urban Society**

Urban society all over the world has a few common features. Let us discuss them briefly as follows:

- **Large population:** The urban society is characterized by a large population in any particular area. Since, urban society comprises cities and towns, and they have high population levels, large population becomes its inherent

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characteristic. Along with large population, there is the prevalence of high density of population.

- **Non-agricultural occupation:** In any urban society, the occupational pattern reveals that most of the people are engaged in non-agricultural economic activities like government jobs, entrepreneurship, jobs in factories or other service industries (banks, colleges, etc.), retail business, etc.
- **Heterogeneity:** This is an important feature of all urban societies. The existence of a large population with diverse backgrounds is bound to result in heterogeneity. Thus, urban societies have a great deal of variance in so far as customs, festivals, lifestyles, ideologies, etc. of its members are concerned.
- **Tolerance:** Urban areas comprise members from various castes, religions, regions, languages, etc. For all of them to live peacefully together, a high degree of mutual tolerance is absolutely essential. Since, urban areas have been largely peaceful and prosperous; it implies that tolerance is a significant feature of the urban society.

### Features of urbanization in ancient and medieval India

The process of urbanization in ancient and medieval India had certain distinct features, which can be classified under the following three broad categories:

1. **Political, demographic and spatial factors:** The processes of urbanization in ancient and medieval India had a very close relationship with the rise and fall of political regimes. Cities emerged on the basis of political considerations and were built around the ruler and his kinsmen. An important physical feature of these early cities was the fortification that was undertaken to protect them. High walls, deceptive ditches and secret tunnels were part of the elaborate steps taken to defend the cities and its people.
2. **Economic factors:** Despite the fluctuating fortunes of the political dynasties of those times, the economic institutions have shown some degree of stability. Guild formation was an important feature of the cities of that time. These guilds performed important functions in the traditional towns in terms of banking, trading, manufacturing, etc.
3. **Religious and socio-cultural factors:** Religion was an important aspect of statecraft in the ancient and medieval times. The rulers patronized a particular religion or sect and their capital cities acquired the culture of that particular religion or sect. For example, when Pataliputra was ruled by Chandragupta Maurya it reflected a Brahmanical Hindu civilization. However, when the reins of the kingdom went to Ashoka, Buddhism

flourished in the same city. The traditional towns were heterogeneous in terms of multiplicity of religious, sectarian and caste groups.

### 14.3.3 Re-urbanization

The term re-urban was introduced by the sociologist C.J. Galpin. It referred to the composite urban settlements wherein the urban and rural population intermingled and stayed connected with and dependent upon each other. These composite settlements were characterized by a blending of rural and urban life. Thus, 'Re-urbanization' was the process that resulted in the development of a composite settlement.

The blending of urban and rural life is not a new phenomenon. The rural–urban fringe has always been a composite area where the rural and urban folks interacted and intermingled. In contrast to ancient times, the distinction between the city and the village has blurred. The city has expanded and passed into the countryside. Beyond the city there is a large area where farms and urban homes are completely mixed and it is not possible to demarcate between them. These composite regions are called re-urban.

In these regions, most of the facilities enjoyed by the urbanites are also enjoyed by the farmers. The farmers use the banking services available in the cities and send their children to the city schools. Similarly, the urbanites grow vegetables and raise poultry in their backyards. Thus, the re-urban region is a distinct ecological type, which is not entirely urban but is city-dominated or city-centred. This kind of an ecological setting, according to some sociologists, is the most desirable for human beings. They believe that the re-urban areas would replace the city and large scale 'Re-urbanization' would take place.

However, there are others like Professor Bergel who thinks that is not going to happen. Their reasoning is that the industries need large number of labourers who are required to stay on the factory premises. Such labourers cannot be allowed to stay far away from the factories. Thus, 'Re-urbanization' would not get the support of industrialisation.

### 14.3.4 Causes of Urbanization

The factors that are mainly responsible for urbanization are as follows:

- **Industrialization:** Industrialization is considered to be the single most important cause for urbanization to have taken place. The emergence of modern industries has proved to be a turning point for the global economic and social development and change. The great impetus to urbanization came with the industrial revolution in England followed by the one on the European

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continent and finally in the United States of America. With the setting up of industries, there was a demand for labour and people moved in from rural areas to fulfil this need and also to satiate their desire for new and more remunerative employment opportunities. Thus, began the process of urbanization.

New habitations developed in and around industries, which had modern amenities like good houses, schools, hospitals, parks, roads, electricity, piped water, public transport, etc. The people who had moved in from the villages found the urban areas better and more comfortable and settled there. They also brought their families in due course of time. Thus, industrialization gave the initial push towards the process of urbanization and reinforced it thereafter.

In the modern era, it is the pace of economic development that determines the growth and development of a country. Industries have fuelled this growth and taken many countries to great heights. Industries cannot operate without men and machines. Therefore, labour and capital are imperative for the growth and success of any industry. This demand for labour is a very significant pull factor for the people living in isolated rural areas to migrate to areas in and around the industries. Similarly, the poverty and lack of employment opportunities proved to be a push factor for the rural populace to move towards these industrial towns.

Thus, industrialization started the process of urbanization and it continued unabated due to its own momentum and the desire of people to lead a modern and comfortable life.

- **Social factors:** Another reason for urbanization is the social factor. The rural folks got attracted by the educational, health and other infrastructural facilities available in the cities. Besides, the cities provided them with more privacy and a great degree of anonymity, which helped them lead their lives without the constant interference of family members and neighbours as it used to happen in villages.

Urbanization fuels many aspirations of the rural population and results in rapid migration of people from the countryside to fulfil these aspirations. This further quickens the pace of urbanization.

- **Modernization:** Modernization is also an important cause of urbanization. Modern facilities in cities like better roads, excellent communication systems, schools and hospitals, etc. attract the rural people to come to the cities in search of a happy and comfortable life. Modernization is a process of adopting the new and better options that are available so as to make human life comfortable. Quite naturally, it brings forth urbanization because it is the city that gets modernized much before the villages.

Modernization and westernization are sometimes used interchangeably. Urbanization is an important feature of the western world and, therefore, it is natural for it to be influenced by modern developments.

- **Employment opportunities:** People from the rural areas migrate to urban areas in search of work opportunities and contribute to the process of urbanization. The villages are mostly agricultural and there is no requirement of a big labour force to work on the land. In fact, the agricultural sector in the rural areas gives rise to a phenomenon called ‘disguised unemployment’. This means that though people appear to be employed in the agricultural sector, they actually contribute nothing because their labour is not at all required. They are unemployed from the productivity sense of the word but such unemployment is disguised by the fact that they are engaged in the fields.

Modern manufacturing and service industries that come up in the cities are big attractions for the rural population. They believe that they can improve their lives by moving out towards the urban centres.

#### Check Your Progress

3. What is the difference between urbanity and urbanization?
4. List the features of sub-urbanization.

### 14.4 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS QUESTIONS

1. Social distance is one significant characteristic of urban society in India. Due to anonymity and heterogeneity, the urban dweller becomes lonely and stays removed from other persons. All social interactions are routine, mechanical and impersonal. There is no social cohesiveness between one another. Rather, there is a great deal of social distance amongst the members of the urban community.
2. The systems of family and marriage are quite different. While joint families and arranged marriages are the order of the day in rural areas, urban areas see a lot of nuclear families and love marriages. Besides, the status of women is higher in urban areas.
3. Urbanization is a process which refers to change in values, attitudes and beliefs of people who migrate from villages to cities and the impact of this movement on people who are left behind in the villages. Urbanity, on the other hand, is the state of the people living in an urban area which is distinct

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from those living in the villages. It refers to a pattern of life in terms of work, food habits and the world view of people living in the urban areas.

4. Sub-urbanization refers to the urbanization of rural areas around the towns and cities and it is characterized by the following features:
  - o A sharp increase in the urban uses of land
  - o Inclusion of the surrounding areas within the municipal limits of the towns and cities
  - o Intensive communication of all types between the town or city and its surrounding areas

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### 14.5 SUMMARY

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- An urban area may be an area that has a very high density of population. But density of population alone cannot be the defining feature. While the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' is comprehensible to everybody, it is not easy to define the terms scientifically.
- Urban areas are large and have very high population. Besides, the communities do not reside in close proximity.
- The housing problem in Indian cities is so acute that many people from the lower class of income do not get a roof above their heads.
- Life is very fast-paced and hectic in the urban areas and is completely different from the languid pace of rural life.
- The urban community of India is greatly focused upon material acquisitions and wealth accumulation. An individual's worth is expressed in terms of his material possessions.
- Both rural and urban societies are part of the same human society and do share a lot of features of each other. There is no clear demarcation between the two. There is no sharp demarcation to tell where the city ends and the country begins.
- There is a different school of thought among sociologists, which believes that a strong dichotomy exists between rural and urban areas.
- It is important to distinguish the concept of urbanization from the concepts of urbanity and urbanism.
- While urban centres gained in prosperity, the rural areas of India became neglected. Cottage industries and rural artisans suffered a lot because of the exploitative economic policies of the British.
- From the beginning of the twentieth century and especially after independence, urbanization in India has taken place at a fast pace.

- Population has always been an important aspect of urbanization in India. The Indian population growth exploded in the twentieth century and, as a result, urban population also grew rapidly.
- Urbanization is both a cause and a consequence of economic development. It is more of a consequence because economic development entails a huge movement of labour and other inputs from the rural areas to the towns and cities.
- Industrialization is considered to be the single most important cause for urbanization to have taken place. The emergence of modern industries has proved to be a turning point for the global economic and social development and change.
- In the modern era, it is the pace of economic development that determines the growth and development of a country. Industries have fuelled this growth and taken many countries to great heights.

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### 14.6 KEY WORDS

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- **Urbanism:** It is characterized by a system of values, norms and attitudes towards the inter-personal relations in terms of individualism and anonymity.
- **Homogeneity:** It implies consisting of parts or people that are similar to each other or are of the same type.
- **Migrant:** It refers to a worker who moves from place to place to do seasonal work.
- **Guild:** It refers to a medieval association of craftsmen or merchants, often having considerable power.

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### 14.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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#### Short-Answer Questions

1. What is an urban community?
2. Write a short note on rural-urban continuum.
3. What are the differences between urban and rural areas?

#### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the characteristics of urban society in India.
2. Explain the pattern of urbanization during British Rule in India.
3. Analyse the significance of the term 're-urbanization.'
4. Describe the causes of urbanization.



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## 14.8 FURTHER READINGS

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### NOTES

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