



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

Indian Sociology

Postgraduate Programme in Sociology



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

COURSE CODE: M21SO03DC

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Indian Sociology
Course Code: M21SO03DC
Semester-I

**Master of Arts
Sociology
Self Learning Material**



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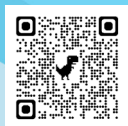
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Indian Sociology



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Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

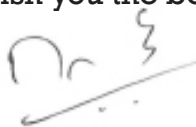
Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centers around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavors.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The PG programme in Sociology is a logical development of the grammar of our UG programme. It is considered to be a progression of the finer aspects of theories and practices. The discussions are meant to arouse interest among the learners in understanding the discipline in the real context and therefore, the examples are drawn heavily from the real life experiences. The provision for empirical evidences integrated endeavour of the academic content makes this programme special and relevant. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that seems relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

01.05.2023

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Approaches to the Study of Indian Society - I

BLOCK-01



Development of Sociology in India

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ comprehend the basic ideas related to the development of sociology in India.
- ♦ narrate the aspects of contextualization of sociology
- ♦ understand the importance of the indigenization of sociology

Background

Many theoreticians have observed that the “new world” formed as the result of Industrial revolution in the 19th century; brought immense changes in the areas of science, technology, politics, culture etc. There is no doubt in the fact that any societal change got reflected in the social life of people. The shift from religious and aristocratic societies to rational, scientifically sensible societies was so optimistic and rather dynamic. The overtaking of human labour by machines was beyond all imaginations. Rural areas transformed as urban places. Migration rate was more towards urban places. On the parallel path; capitalism gained its gear of control and took over the means of production. The political interventions of the capitalists influenced the nation’s economy and power structure. Industrialisation was an awakening call, and social changes caught the attention of thinkers all around the world. August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber argued for the sociological way of understanding society.

As you all know, the socio-political and economic background of 18th century Europe led to the emergence of Sociology. While sociology has been emerging in European society related to the period of enlightenment, where there any changes reflected in the Eastern world; especially in India? This unit will facilitate a better understanding on the emergence and development of Sociology in India.



Keywords

Ethno-sociology, Post-independence, Anthropology, Eurocentrism

Discussion

- ◆ Three-tier development of sociology

A very vital observation put forward by M.Panini and M.N.Srinivas points out the three important stages in the growth of Sociology and Anthropology in India. First phase is marked from 1773 to 1900; the second phase is from 1901 to 1950 and the third phase is marked after independence, i.e. 1950 onwards. Another theorist Lakshmana understands the development of Sociology in India through three phases; firstly 1917-1946, secondly 1947-1966 and thirdly 1967 onwards.

1.1.1 Sociology's Evolution in India before Independence

- ◆ Indigenous way of studying society

Indian society could be essentially marked by caste, religion, family, law etc. Henry Maine, Alfred Lyelt and many other thinkers helped the development of Sociology in India. Literally they helped in the indigenous way of understanding society. There was an important need to preserve native social institutions and culture. Indian culture has its own way of manifestation and it possesses valuable tradition. Apart from Indologists; British administrators also made extensive research in Indian society. The majority of these investigations contributed to the creation of a body of knowledge that is still referenced by social anthropologists and sociologists today. This knowledge is kept in Census Reports, Imperial Gazetteers, District Gazetteers, etc.

Sir Henry Sumner Maine, an English jurist and legal historian was influenced by the experiences he received from Indian society. He was the legal member of council in India under British rule from 1861 to the later years. After living for more than seven years in India, Maine got familiarized with Eastern ideas and was able to compare them with the Western culture. Maine's famous works Village Communities in the East and the West (1871), Early History of Institutions (1875); Early Law and Custom (1883) did an elaborative analysis of the east-west systems of thought. He



◆ Law and social relationships

examined the normal process of development in legal and political ideas. He found common threads of development in the East and the West. He researched the early development of law and finalized the notion that societies involve in the transition from 'individuals being bound by social status in their relationships' to 'independent individuals who make contracts with other individuals'. Maine found the social factors of legal transactions and later specialised in Sociology of law. This provided insights to a social structure that supports peaceful and harmonious human relationships. Henry Maine's most important work, *Ancient Law* (1861) compared legal systems of primitive societies, ancient Rome, European countries, and India, in order to find some general principles of law.

◆ Ethnography

Indian sociology dates back to the time when British officials realized that understanding Indian culture and social life was essential to the efficient operation of government. Since that time, numerous missionaries and British authorities have worked to gather and document data on the way of life and culture of their Indian people. Also, it is relevant to the growth of sociology in India. Indian sociologists significantly contributed to the growth of indigenous studies of Indian social structure. Without considering its overwhelming past, it can be challenging to comprehend the beginnings and evolution of sociology in India. In India, Herbert Risely was a pioneer of ethnographic research. Consequently, Risely's impact led to an increase in the popularity of ethnographic investigations. Major studies which gained popularity during 19th century were ethnographic studies, caste related in-depth studies, religion, rituals, and customs etc. This helped in establishing a foundation for colonial control in India.

◆ Local culture

There are some vital factors that led to the development of Sociology in India. One main factor is the mixed notion of colonial interests and intellectual curiosities of the British social scientists. For better administrations, British authorities had to demand an understanding of Indian society's traditions, customs, and institutions. As a result, they learn about this topic, along with Christian missionaries who are curious about the local language, culture, and customs. A number of tribal, caste, village, and religious group studies were conducted in India as a result of these conflicting interests.

Other intellectual sources of interest in Indian society also existed. Others were drawn to the ancient political economy,

◆ Orientalism

law, religion, and institutions of Sanskrit, Vedic, and Aryan civilisation because of their similarities to modern political economy, law, and religion. From the beginning, William Jones, Max Muller, Karl Marx, and Frederic were interested in the development of Indological studies, and Henry Marine and Max Weber developed an interest in Hinduism and other eastern religions. Karl Marx and Frederic also used their interest in the nature of oriental disposition in India to develop their theory of the evolution of capitalism. As a result, Indian society and culture provided the basis for numerous ideas and a subject of research for issues including poverty, village social organisation, urbanisation, and other social structures.

◆ Rise of the disciplines

The stage or phase of early Indian thinkers was a multi-level union. The fact that Bombay and Calcutta, two locations that are traditionally associated with colonialism. They were also the birthplaces of the twin disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. In the second decade of the previous century, their beginnings were essentially simultaneous.

◆ Empiricism

It is possible to identify some sociological expansion tendencies since independence. In the pre-independence era, sociology was taught with economics in Bombay and Lucknow, alongside anthropology in Calcutta, and in Mysore. Social philosophy included sociology. Before independence considerable studies or empirical techniques or methodologies weren't developed. As a result Sociology lacked its identity and was considered as a miscellaneous bag.

◆ Ethno-sociology

It is important to note that Anthropology was developing parallel with Sociology. Anthropology gave importance to the study of tribes, caste and communities whereas Sociology gave focus on the urban context and industrial communities. There is an interesting observation by researchers that, if we simply put Sociology and Anthropology outside its methodology it is impossible to distinguish them. Sociologists have studies Anthropology and vice versa. There is a term which is used to denote this kind of researchers. They are called as 'Ethno-sociologists'. This term has prominent significance in the Anthropological and Sociology domains.

Now let us discuss the way of study adopted by the ethno-sociologists. They combine documentary data, field data, literature related to the research topic and oral histories. Indian academic studies could never be separated

◆ Religiosity

from caste, tribe etc. Therefore most of the world of ethno-sociologists have a similar trait. Those researches gave importance to experiences and empirical data. Ethno-sociologists work among the communities in both the rural and tribal areas. The pre-independence period witnessed the ethnographic works of British administrators J.H.Hutton, Edward Theurston, H. Risely etc. Other important works were by Sir. Henry Maine and W.H. Baden Powell. The intellectual growth in the West was very different from that of India. The idea of secularism gained momentum as a response to the dominance of Church. But in India the aspects of religiosity was the prominent aspect in the whole social structure. Interaction with the West initiated innovative social research in India.

◆ Development of the discipline

Sociologist B. N. Seal initiated Sociology in India and it officially began in 1917 at Calcutta University. Following it, Radhakamal Mukharjee and B. N. Sarkar handled the subject. Unfortunately, Anthropology grew in Calcutta with the creation of the department and later the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI). Sociology was unable to advance in the city where it was formed.

◆ Bombay and Lucknow University

Now let us analyse the position of Sociology in Western India. We can see an entirely different picture here. In 1914, Bombay University established Sociology with funding from the Indian government. The Department of Sociology at Bombay University was founded in 1919 with Patrick Geddes as the in-charge. Soon after, G. S. Ghurye and N. A. Tothi joined Patrick. This was a significant improvement for sociology in India. Radhakamal Mukharjee served as the department's head when sociology was first offered in Lucknow's Department of Economics and Sociology in 1921. It became another influential centre for sociological theory and research.

◆ Chronology of university departments

Eventually, D. P. Mukerji and D. N. Majumdar assisted Radhakamal Mukherjee with appropriate support. Sociology first started in South India in 1928 at Mysore University by the efforts of B. N. Seal and A. F. Wadia. Osmania University started an undergraduate study of sociology in the same year. Under the direction of Irawati Karve, Pune began offering sociology and anthropology courses in 1930. From 1917 and 1946, the progress of sociology was irregular and monotonous.

During this time Bombay was the primary focus of

◆ Trends of ethnology

sociological activity. Bombay University initiated the efforts to combine Indology and ethnology. It produced a unique line of Sociology departments. It is Bombay University that produced a line of major Sociologists like K. M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, S. V. Karandikar, M. N. Srinivas, A. R. Desai, I. P. Desai, M. S. Gore, and Y. B. Damle. The timeline of Sociology flourished through the contributions of these Sociologists.

1.1.2 Sociology's Growth in Post-Independence India

◆ Projects and planning

According to theorist Lakshman the post-independence era can be considered as the second stage in the development of sociology. The central government promoted social science research and Indian Sociological Society was formed in Bombay. An official journal, Sociological Bulletin also started its function. This satisfied the much needed quest of creating a platform for the publication of sociology material. Lucknow school of Sociology commenced All India Sociological Conference to promote the professional engagement of Sociology. Lakshman observed that University campuses played a vital role in promoting research endeavors. Campuses executed research projects and escalated demands of social planners and administrators. After independence, research institutes were established and it increased the significance of the topic.

◆ Influences of intellectual ideas

What may be the major change in the curriculum of Sociology taught in Universities before and after universities? Before independence, the concerns of vested interests of the Great Britain had a significant impact in the curriculum. The American sociological tradition swept away the aspects of Indology from the curriculum. Along with American influence; French, German and Marxist movements influenced Indian academics. Indian sociologists started to critique, alter, and create various sociological methodologies to analyse Indian society and culture in the context of such diverse intellectual inspirations, and these are represented in the academic programmes of various universities. When there was a rise in the number of universities and colleges; vertical and horizontal mobility in the profession began.

The time period following independence reflected three factors. First, sociology gained greater reliability among academics. Second, Sociology developed its identity as a discipline; by setting itself apart from Psychology,



- ◆ The attempts to a “proper” sociology

Anthropology, Social Philosophy, and Social Work. However, Sociology is still taught together with Social Pathology and Social Psychology in several universities. In many other places, there is a highly varied curriculum structure for proper sociology, with specialisations in rural and urban sociology, sociology of kinship, sociology of religion, sociology of education, sociology of stratification, social demography, and sociology of economic development etc. Finally, diversification began when sociological approach expanded into other spheres of social life. It has to do with the expanding demands of India’s independent growth. Sociologists quickly develop a sensitivity to development issues in the context of tribal, rural, and urban settings. To comprehend the dynamics, structure and social issues sociologists began to do empirical research which was rather scientific and methodological. All of these issues had an impact on sociology instruction at various levels.

1.1.3 Contextualisation of Indian Sociology

- ◆ Community uniqueness

Consequently, it is important to understand each community within its own unique setting. Context influences ideology, theory, and methodology. Any philosophy, theory, or approach is irrelevant without the context. In light of this, we will talk about sociologists’ contributions to the Indian setting. Thus contextualization of Sociology is very pertinent.

- ◆ Influence of western paradigm

The Western paradigm has had a considerable impact on and served as a model for Indian sociology, which emerged as a distinct discipline during the colonial and post-colonial periods. In India, almost all sociologists have studied the theoretical framework developed by Durkheim, Weber, Marx, and Parsons.

According to Yogendra Singh, Indian sociologists have taken four theoretical stances in addition to the western paradigms:

- Philosophical
- Culturological
- Structural
- Dialectical-historical

Yogendra Singh’s (1993) major essay on ideology, theory, and method in Indian sociology, spans around 25 years from 1952 to 1977. It is as follows:

- 1952 to 1960, a time of invention and adaptable

transformation;

b. 1960 to 1965 - a time of notable changes in theoretical priorities and the emergence of some crucial tensions in Indian sociology's theory and ideology;

c. 1965 to 1970, a time of significant growth in new theoretical and substantive contributions as well as sociological self-awareness; and

d. The years 1970 to 1977 were a time of new maturity and expanding knowledge boundaries.

1.1.4 Indigenisation of Indian Sociology

The process of "indigenizing" is the process of altering anything to better fit to the local culture, often through engaging more indigenous people in positions of authority in government, business, and other sectors. Indian sociology gained its momentum through the process of studying culture within its relative space.

◆ Local culture

1.1.4.1 Development of Sociology in the 1970s

In-depth areas of social research began in 1960s and later gained the momentum of specialization in the 1970s. The period of 1970s both Sociologists and anthropologists started paying more attention to the issues of agrarian structure. Agrarian relations, land reforms, agricultural laborers and scheduled castes/tribes became the focus of interest. The Marxian framework of analysis was used to research the inconsistencies and tensions within the agrarian social structure. The inconsistencies and tensions of the social structure were analysed.

◆ Community studies

Throughout the 1970s, other popular study fields also emerged namely social stratification, urban sociology, and industrial sociology. The decade of 1970s saw attention in the fields of profession-specific sociology, organisational sociology, medical sociology, social demography, studies on women, and Hindu-Muslim relations. New focuses and methodologies were commenced in a number of important fields of study including caste, kinship, religion, politics, and tribal studies. 1970s and beyond witnessed novel assessments and advancements in sociology and social anthropology.

◆ New attempts in studying society

1.1.4.2 Sociology in the 1980s

Several research topics, such social demography and medical sociology, came into focus during 1980s. The sociology of knowledge, the sociology of science and

◆ Newly developed fields



technology, the sociology of deviance, and historical sociology were a few of the newly developed fields.

◆ Sociological tasks

There was a sign that sociology of science and technology would attract a larger audience. Fox mirrored the expanding interest in historical sociology. Damle predicted the sociological task for India in the 1980s was to: (1) study the transformation of Indian society, (2) to investigate the limits of such transformation, and (3) to assess the impact of these limits on such transformation, which was reflected either in the frustrations of the efforts to overcome the obstacles. New ideologies and protest movements took special relevance in this decade.

1.1.4.3 Sociology in the 1990s

◆ Strategies for development

The decade of 1990 witnessed research in fields like sociology of planning and development, dimensions of poverty, law, social change, organisations, etc. India had been undergoing major socio-political and cultural transformations and this expanded the sphere of Indian Sociology. The Indian government had cherished the mixed economy policy since independence and the ideal of welfare capitalism, allowed the market-oriented strategy. Social researches came up to take priority of this development.

◆ Social implications

The government implemented new economic reform policies in 1991 with the intention of globalising its economy. The government's two main initiatives in this direction were liberalisation policies and this granted the foreign businesses and money to enter the Indian market. The impact of globalization also impacted the cultural heritage and life of Indian population. The aspects of civic society, crisis and resilience of social change, specific implication of new economic policy etc. were the main interest-areas.

◆ Global themes and courses

Global themes have been adopted in various universities. These include things like action sociology, developing human resources, human rights concerns, management sociology, ecological and society, and media and society. Moreover, new courses in public order, security management, information technology, and sociology of peace and security started. These programmes are crucial for study into how societies are built, as well as for the advancement of modern careers and occupations etc.

1.1.5 Indian Sociological Research

From 1947, sociological research saw a tremendous

◆ ICSSR and research projects

increase. There was a rapid increase in the number of research papers produced from Indian universities and colleges. The earlier studies of Backer and Barnes (1961), Saran (1958), Bottomore (1962), Clinard and Elder (1965), Vidhyarthi (1972) etc. have remarked significantly in the phases and patterns of Indian social structure. Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR) also contributed to the flow.

◆ Syllabus and curriculum

Many organisations funded, sponsored, and supported a number of sociological studies. The UGC review committee of Sociology added a few modules on social research in the M.A curriculum in 1960. The area of doctoral study expanded much. The departmental level of universities developed research facilities. Both ICSSR and UGC made appropriate plans for these facilities. Both stood as the primary organisations encouraging Sociology and Anthropological research.

◆ Higher education sector

According to the observation of Lakshman, there weren't many recognised supervisors accessible to guide doctoral research students in the departments of universities until almost the middle of the 1950s. In addition to these limitations, up until 1970, sociology and other related subjects awarded around 438 doctoral degrees; at the same time economics and political science outperformed these numbers. However, sociology had a low level of personnel. Only economics, political science, and business are ahead of sociology. The position is the same in higher education as well.

◆ Reinforcing sociology as a boring field

Lakshman observed that; in the 1960s and 1970s, despite staffing shortages, sociologists conducted a relatively high number of research projects (50), accounting for the biggest percentage (25.5%) of ICSSR funding. Inclusion of social anthropology makes the situation even more favorable. Because the challenges were formulated in a realistic and sound manner, sociology was able to accept most projects (more than 20%) than any other field. Many essays on the situation of sociology research and instruction have been published in EPW during this time. They reinforced the idea that sociology in India has turned into a very boring field, with its core ideas delivered in out-of-date mass market-American texts and had strikingly little interaction with society outside of the classroom.

The discipline's crisis has been the subject of active discussion in the 1990s. In this discussion, Deshpande



- ◆ Discipline's crisis and new dimension

provided a number of responses assessing the "Tiredness of the discipline". The potential of a "community of discourse," the threats of "uncritical metropolitanism," the applicability of gender and feminist pedagogies were the aspects related to the crises. The development of the sociological discipline and sociology, along with the instruction in Indian universities have been discussed by J.P.S Uberoi, The discussion surrounding gender studies and women's issues also had taken a new dimension.

- ◆ Ethical standards

Veena Das opines that the UGC, universities, and professional organisations like the Indian Sociological Society are all experiencing a crisis in sociological research in India. First, the need to ensure competency in teaching and research has simply not kept pace with the development of the topic at the university level. Second, the UGC will have to take its primary obligation and the universities are to share some of the blame for the declining standards for research. The UGC's decision-making bodies appear to have totally incorrect perceptions on the state of social science research in the nation. Third, professional organisations have limited options to improve the circumstances. In addition to creating more jobs for sociologists, the profession's goals also include preserving the discipline's ethical standards.

1.1.6 Bombay and Lucknow Schools of Thought

- ◆ Aspect of school of thought

Academically speaking, there are two schools of thought namely Bombay and Lucknow schools of thought in the development of Sociology. Bombay University and Lucknow University became the main focal points of teaching and learning of Sociology in India. Is it logical to use the term 'school' in a stricter sense like the Frankfurt or Chicago school? Sociologists opine that Bombay and Lucknow schools were distinct in their approach. See the following example, A.R Desai's sociological perspective matches Bombay school and he is a Marxist. At the same time G.S Ghurye, who is an Indologist also belongs to Bombay school. This means that Desai and Ghurye could be learnt both in terms of their 'spatial location' and theoretical dispositions. In the same way Iravathi Karve is the pioneer of Kinship studies in India but she didn't include in either Bombay or Lucknow school. A critical analysis of the Lucknow school sociologists and their pedagogical tools shows that the term 'school' is critique. R.K.Mukherjee and D.P.Mukherjee belong to the Lucknow school but they had different focus areas in studying Indian

society. R.K.Mukherjee was an economist who turned to be a social ecologist and later a sociologist. D.P.Mukherjee was a historian cum economist with roots in Marxian perspective.

- ◆ Limitations of the usage 'school'

Thus the usage of 'school' has limitations in the Indian context. First one is that there are differences within the scholars included in a particular school. Second limitation is that both schools have got significant contributions from sociologists who hadn't belonged to the respective school. Hence, according to critics a 'water tight compartmentalization' of Lucknow and Bombay schools is not possible. G.S Ghurye is considered as the pioneer of Bombay school while Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.P. Mukherji and Awadh Kishore Saran were the forerunners of the Lucknow school.

- ◆ Consolidated academic thoughts

Apart from these schools of thought, there are several educational institutions that have contributed to the development of Sociology in India. Sociology, as a discipline and profession flourished in Mysore, Pune, Ranchi, Patna and Calcutta. In 1959, M.N Srinivas came up with great academic power from Delhi University. He understood society in terms of Sanskritization and Westernization. Other than the major school-up comings; India has witnessed strands of consolidated thoughts with academic base. A few of them will become familiar to you in the coming units. Iravati Karve, John Vincent Ferreira, Patrick Geddes are a few of the contributors of the consolidated thoughts.

1.1.7 Sociology as a Teaching-learning Subject in India

- ◆ Pre-independence research

In the decade of 1920s saw the emergence of sociology in India. Starting off, sociology classes were taught at Bombay University as early as 1914. When Bombay and Lucknow developed sociology departments, academic sociology truly began. The tradition that pre-independence researchers provided, allowed sociology in India to develop and grow as a discipline.

- ◆ University departments

British contributions started to be felt because there were more universities between 1920 and 1945. According to Parvathamma in the years between 1920 and 1950, fewer universities had sociology departments. However after 1950, it started to exhibit an upward tendency. In India, the percentage of universities with sociology departments increased from 23.8% in 1960 to 29.6% in 1965.



In the period of 1920 to 1950, there was a fall in the percentage of universities having Sociology departments. After 1950s there was a regular increase in this trend. By 1960s 23.8% of universities in India possessed Sociology departments. By 1965, the rate increased to 29.6%. The average rate of PhD done in Sociology was 46 per year, since 1968. This is impressive compared to the earlier periods. During the decade of 1931-40, 34 PhDs were submitted. 79 PhDs were submitted in the decade of 1941-60.

◆ Increase in the University departments

According to Unnithan, by 1960s 54% of the 95 institutions had a department of Sociology. Just 32 of these universities had independent departments, although 14 offer undergraduate, graduate, and Doctoral programmes. Although Sociology is integrated with other Social Science departments in 16 institutions, a separate degree is granted only in three departments, where the topic is taught.

◆ Sociology as a course

The 16 Agricultural Universities, the 5 All India Institutes of Technology, the 3 Institutes of Technology, the 3 Institutes of Management, the Indian Statistical Institute in Kolkata, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, and the Gujarat Vidhyapith in Ahmedabad all offered Sociology as a course of study and research in 1973, according to the Universities Handbook of India.

◆ Learning discipline

After 1980s; next to economics, history, and political science, sociology drew the most students, indicating its significant importance. In universities, sociology was taught at every level, from graduate through M.Phil. or PhD. In India, the majority of universities offer graduate and postgraduate courses in Principles of Sociology, Indian Social Institutions, and Social Changes, while the postgraduate level also offers courses in Research Methods, Rural and Urban Sociology, Social Anthropology, Social Psychology, and other topics. Currently around 2490 colleges in India offer Sociology. About 850 of them are private, 815 public/ government and 380 public-private colleges

1.1.8 Critical Analysis of Indigenous Studies

Indigenous studies were the natural response to the Western Sociology's Eurocentric perspective. Nothing better than the local/community/cultural methodologies ensembles the study of Indian culture. Thus, de-colonisation of the methodology was most important. Indian culture have different backgrounds which was very different and unique from those in the West. Western methodology fostered

◆ Decolonisation
of methodology

intellectual dependency and resulted in the disparities of knowledge generation on a global scale as well as in its dissemination, exchange, and consumption. As a result, non-Western societies urged to develop their own sociology. Lack of proper documentation, absence of pragmatism and subjective bias were the main defects of the Indigenous studies. Western knowledge was championed with objective and reliable knowledge and on the other hand, traditional or local culture was labelled as unreliable, incomplete and subjected to outside influences. Despite how robust it may seem, there have been a need for the critical analysis of indigenous studies. But the efforts of studying India, from an Indigenous level promoted a wholesome understanding of Indian culture.

Summarised Overview

In short, Sociology emerged in India because of the urgent need of the British to understand Indian culture and social structure. As per the account of historians; the revolt of 1857 put the British in an alarm and it literally shook the plans of colonialists. They understood the need for a better understanding of the Indian religious system, practices and culture. The root level analysis and research on Indian society enabled the British to continue ruling India for the next ninety years.

The colonial rule gripped when ethnographic studies expanded. Anthropology and Sociology contributed to the well-knit understanding of Indian society. Historical records says that a British ethnographer and colonial administrator named Herbert Hope Risely initiated ethnographic research in India in the second half of 19th century. By the mid-19th century Sociology began to focus on the Indigenous studies. The scientific way of looking at society and culture began only in the post-independence period. The mixed or vague identity of Sociology in the pre-independence period was blown after the 1950-s. In the years following independence, sociology developed its distinct identity as a discipline by parting ways with psychology, anthropology, and social philosophy. Some of the prominent researchers who helped determine the course of the Sociology field include G. S. Ghurye, N. A. Toothi, D. N. Majumdar, B. N. Seal, K. M. Kapadia, Iravati Karve, S. V. Karandikar, M. N. Srinivas, A. R. Desai, I. P. Desai, M. S. Gore, and Y. B. Damle. Also, it supported the formation and growth of sociology in India.

It is undeniable that a great deal of empirical research has been done over the past few decades, but it would be difficult to argue that India's sociology has attained its own level of theoretical maturity. Despite the proliferation of new research fields, theoretical rigour and depth of interpretation appear to be lacking. Serious academics continue to value and acknowledge the rigorous



and major contributions of earlier generations of sociologists. It illustrates the following key methods for studying Indian society: Ghurye and Dumont are indologists. Srinivas and Dube are structural-functionalists. D.P. Mukerji and A.R. Desai and Ramkrishna Mukherjee are Marxists. N.K. Bose and Surajit Sinha are civilizationalists. Ambedkar, David Hardiman, and Ranajit Guha are subalterns. A few of these will be covered in the following blocks of this course.

Assignments

1. It is seen that the intellectual developments in the West and India were different. Explain
2. Narrate the process of contextualizing and indigenizing Sociology
3. Why did the British initiate cultural studies in India?
4. Explain the initial timeline of Indian Sociology
5. Who are called ethno-sociologists?
6. Explain the development of sociology in the University level education.
7. How did sociology get contextualized?
8. What do you mean by indigenization of sociology?

Suggested Readings

1. Singhi, N. K. (1996), *Theory and Method in Indian Sociology*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
2. <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/essay/another-aspect-of-metanarratives-marxist-analysis-of-indian-society/39890>
3. <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/paragraphs/paragraph-on-micro-politics-in-indian-sociology/39888>

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1. Ghurye, G. S. (1968). *The Teaching of Sociology, Social Psychology and Social Anthropology, in the Teaching of Social Sciences in India*. pp. 152-64. Delhi: Universal publishers
2. Lakshmanan, C. (1974). *Teaching and Research in Sociology in India*, Sociological bulletin, 23(1): 1-13. New Delhi: Sage publications

3. Madan, T. N. (1974). *The Teaching of Sociology in India: Some Comments*, Sociological Bulletin, 23(1): 113-18. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
4. Mukharjee, R. K. (1973). *Indian Sociology: Historical Development and Present Problems*, Sociological Bulletin, 22(1): 29-58. New Delhi: Sage Publications
5. Vidhyarathi, L. P. (1972). *Tribal Ethnography in India, A Survey of Researchers in Social Anthropology and Sociology*. New Delhi: ICSSR Publications

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Indological Approach

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the basic idea related to Indological approach
- ◆ comprehend the important works of Louis Dumont
- ◆ understand the caste related works done by G.S.Ghurye
- ◆ learn the peculiarities of Kinship studies initiated Iravathi Karve

Background

The British started studying Indian society and their attempts for the documentation of Indian culture were reserved as a crucial need. They used the collected data as a weapon to control Indian social structure. Indology became a necessity for Indian sociologists because the documentation done by the British were biased in both the methods and techniques of research. The Indian sociologists knew the necessity of cultural relativism and they wanted to learn and manifest Indian in a broader and truer spectrum. Both a method for studying Indian society and a separate academic field with Indian society as its focus are known as Indology. In both cases, Indology entails the study of a variety of cultural elements, including language, conventions, taboos, codes, institutions, rituals, and ceremonies. According to the perspective of Indology, the nature of Indian thought and psychological makeup (characterised by holism, collectivism, and freedom) differs from that of the West (characterised by the primacy of the individual, freedom, and rights). A society must be understood in terms of Indian thinking, traditions, and philosophy. But MN Srinivas claims that Indology is just the literary interpretation of Indian society. It deals with the concepts of Indian civilization as they are described in the Vedas, Upanishads, Dharma Shastra, Manusmriti, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and other classical religious works. It has little to do with the actual conditions on the ground. As the perspectives on Indology range in diversity, let us spread out our attention towards the Indological approach in studying society.



Keywords

Kinship, Caste, Indology, Civilisation

Discussion

◆ Book view and culture

Let us start with much clarity that the study of Indian society is referred to as Indology. The Indological approach makes the assertion that it may better comprehend Indian society by using ideas, theories, and conceptual frameworks that are closely related to Indian Civilisation. It stated that Indian society cannot be compared to European society because of its distinctive structure, function, and dynamics. Indology rejects rigorous empirical research and is based on a book view and culture.

◆ Cultural elements

Both a method for studying Indian society and a separate academic field with Indian society as its focus are known as Indology. In both cases, Indology entails the study of a variety of cultural elements, including language, conventions, taboos, codes, institutions, rituals, and ceremonies. Inter-, multi-, and cross-disciplinary approaches are necessary for Indology. Indology is older than sociology. It was designed in 1784 by Sir William Jones of Bengal, making it antique in nature. The Asiatic Society of Bengal was established in 1987 by Sir William Jones, who also established its Sanskrit and Indology departments. It marks the birth of Indology in India, which later spread to other academics.

◆ Academic endeavors

Because Indology is primarily a textual topic, several academics have performed their research using texts. A wide range of topics were studied at this time, including social organisation and relationships, cultural values, kinship, ideology, cultural exchanges, and symbols of life and the universe. Several academicians, including Bernett, David, Fruzzetti and Oslor, Inden and Nicholas, Khare, Murray, Marriott, Pocock, Eck, etc., have done studies based on texts. The majority of these studies are founded on textual resources taken from myths, tales, epics, folklore, and other cultural symbols. The most of these have been released in T.N. Madan's "*Contributing to Indian Sociology*" (New Series).



Concentrating on the perspective's beginnings, William Jones, Henry Maine, Max Muller, and other Orientalists contributed to the development of indological perspective. They have made significant contributions to the advancement of civilization, and as a result, indological perspective has developed. All of them have based their academic work on the rich cultural traditions of India as well as the guiding principles of the country and its Hindu laws. As a result, they were also known as Indologists. Indology has also had an influence on many of the pioneers of Indian sociology. The many scholars include Louis Dumont, G.S. Ghurye, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, P.H. Prabhu, and B.K. Sarkar.

1.2.1 Louis Dumont

Louis Dumont - Biographical Sketch



Louis Dumont (1911-1998) is a world-renowned theoretician specialising in the fields of sociology and anthropology. His studies concentrated on India and the West. His exemplary studies are based on methodology which he developed for the study of specific cultures as well as inter-civilizational comparison, and these are universally applicable. Dumont, the grandson of a painter and the son of an engineer, merged his worldview with the attributes of both professions, notably creative imagination and an everlasting interest in the concrete.

Dumont began his academic career in the mid-1930s under the direction of sociologist and Sanskritist Marcel Mauss. World War II disrupted his studies, but not completely. He was imprisoned as a prisoner of war in a factory on the outskirts of Hamburg. He studied German, there.

He returned home in 1945, at the close of the war. He returned to the *Musees des Arts et Traditions Populaires* (ATP), where he had previously worked in a non-academic capacity. Here, he continued his studies on French furniture and studied a folk festival, the Tarascon, about which he later authored a monograph, *La Tarasque*. In this study, Dumont included ethnographic details and a holistic approach.

He also studied Sanskrit. He got the opportunity to meet Professor Schubring, a Jain studies expert. Around this time, he also pursued his interest in India, sparked by Mauss' instruction. He took Hindi and Tamil courses at the *Ecole des Langues Orientales* and considered south Indian ethnography. His supporters included comparativist Georges Dumezil and Indologist Louis Renou.

During World War II, Louis Dumont's anthropological work opened up a new field for the study of Indian society. His work has received much praise, although it is still subject to criticism. India and the West have been the subject of much discussion about him. His excellent studies utilise methodology that he developed for the analysis of specific societies and for the comparison of other civilizations.

Dumont's primary contributions centre on the following:

- a. Methodological perspective
- b. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications
- c. Concept of pure and impure
- d. Theory of Varnas
- e. Religion, Politics and History in India

♦ Vedic and post-vedic tradition



Dumont spent the years 1949 and 1950 in Tamil Nadu researching the Pramalai Kallar, a member community of the regional caste system who occupies a middling position. It's interesting to note that he opted to concentrate on south India since he thought the origins of post-Vedic Hinduism and the socio-cultural makeup of classical India had been influenced by interactions between Aryan-speaking people from the North and the Southern Dravidians.

Major Works of Louis Dumont

1. La Tarasque (1951)
2. One sous-caste de Inde du sud: Organization sociale et religion des pramalai Kallar (1957)
3. Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance in South India (1957)
4. Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications (1966, 1970)
5. Religion, Politics and History in India: Collected Papers in Indian Sociology (1970)
6. Homo aequalis (1977)



- ♦ Village as a subject of study

Even in 1974, Dumont was condemned for underrating the relevance of the village as a principle of social organisation. Due to the 1950s-era perspective village is valuable as a unit of study. But for Dumont “caste” was more important to study than “Village.” But, in order to comprehend Indian religion, politics, and history, this type of “village” collaboration was also mixed with observing alternatives.

- ♦ Fieldworks and regional comparison

Dumont resided in a village in the Gorakhpur district of eastern Uttar Pradesh for fifteen months in 1957–1958. Even though the length of the fieldwork was not significantly shorter than in Tamil Nadu, he was not as drawn to north India as the south had been. Nonetheless, the fieldwork sparked his interest in regional comparison, and as a result, he published in-depth examinations of marriage and kinship terminology. Hinduism, caste, kinship in historic India, and social-political movements in contemporary India are his core sociological research interests.

1.2.1.1 Homo Hierarchicus (The Caste System and its Implications)

- ♦ Ethnographic analysis

Dumont’s 1966 essay *The Caste System and Its Implications* is unique in its conception, design, and execution. This is a thorough theoretical effort that enables us to access the enormous corpus of caste-related ethnographic data that is now available. This study differs from others in that it completely sets out to construct a model and starts with a cardinal explanatory principle – hierarchy.

- ♦ Hierarchy matters

According to some scholars, hierarchy sets Indian society apart from “modern” cultures, where equality is the guiding social concept. The main argument can be summarised as follows: regardless of how vociferously or fervently people who stand to gain from a hierarchy, support it, those who perceive its adverse effects on themselves will always be hostile to it. Everyone who is at the bottom of a hierarchy perceives it as being unfair to them and objects to the system or the way it is applied to them. So, any social hierarchy is created and maintained by elites, and as long as the situation allows, those who are oppressed by it fight back. Both in India and everywhere else, this is true.

Louis Dumont was especially interested in the caste system’s ideology. He is categorised as someone who adheres to the attributional approach to the caste system. He views caste as a collection of kinship, political, and economic

- ◆ Essence of caste and inequality

links that are supported by a set of “values,” the majority of which are religious in nature. According to Dumont, caste is a unique type of inequality. It’s essence must be unravelled and not studied as a form of stratification. In this passage, Dumont cites “hierarchy” as the fundamental principle that underlies the caste system and is upheld by Hinduism.

1.2.1.2 Purity and Pollution

- ◆ The contrary of two

Dumont had two inquiries in mind while thinking about the terms “pure” and “impure”: Why does this division apply to hereditary groups? And if it explains the distinction between Brahmins and untouchables, can it also explain why society is divided into numerous categories, some of which are incredibly subdivided? These questions were not immediately addressed by him.

- ◆ Brahminical purity

Yet, the contrary has always been true, with Brahmins and untouchables being two extreme divisions. In comparison to other castes, the Brahmins held the highest position in society and were regarded as being “pure,” while the untouchables, who were kept outside the village and considered “impure,” were not permitted to drink water from the same wells as the Brahmins.

- ◆ Impure and pure aspects

In addition to this, they experienced a number of other difficulties and lacked access to Hindu temples. Dumont claimed that since the Gandhian agitation and India’s independence, the situation had shifted substantially. Untouchability was viewed as forbidden. Gandhi labelled untouchables as “Harijans” or “Sons of Hari,” which are considered to be divine beings (Vishnu). Untouchables specialise in “impure” tasks, which causes some groups of individuals to be stigmatised as massively and perpetually impure. Dumont draws attention to both transient and enduring to impurity. In more developed nations, death, birth, and other such events often result in the seclusion of the afflicted people. For example, a freshly delivered mother might be prohibited from entering a church for forty days before returning with a lit candle and being greeted by the priest outside the church.

Hindus typically ascribe the castes themselves to the varnas, and Dumont believes that one cannot discuss the castes without bringing up the varnas. The Brahmins, or priests, are at the top of India’s traditional hierarchy of varnas, or “colours,” or estates, followed by the Ksatriyas, or



◆ Power-play

warriors, the Vaishyas, or modern-day merchants, and finally the Shudras, or servants or have-nots. The untouchables are a different category that falls outside of the classification scheme. The ancient literature is almost entirely focused on the varnas and Dumont claims that many Indologists conflate the varna with caste. It is important to understand how power and hierarchy relate to caste and varna.

According to Dumont, this concept captures the fundamental traits of the caste system. He focuses on three primary topics:

1. Castes and tiny territories make up much of India;
2. Every caste is restricted to a specific geographic location.
3. Under the caste system, it is impossible to wed someone from a different caste.

◆ The system of ideas and values

Dumont actually emphasises the “state of mind” that is expressed by the appearance of castes in diverse circumstances. He refers to the caste system as an “ideas and values” system that is a “formally comprehensible rational structure.” His analysis is found on the opposition of pure and impure, which is just one premise. Hierarchy, which denotes supremacy of the pure and inferiority of the impure, is based on this contradiction. Separation—the idea that the pure and the impure must be kept apart—is likewise based on this premise.

◆ Caste Ideology

Dumont believed that understanding the caste system is fundamental for understanding India and that studying it is a crucial component of general sociology. He emphasised the importance of comprehending caste ideology as it appears in ancient writings, historical examples, etc. Indological and structuralist approaches should be used, he argued, to investigate India’s caste system and rural social structure.

◆ Indian civilization

He considered “Indian sociology” to be a specialist field that stands at the intersection of Indology and sociology, and he promotes it as the proper kind of “mix” necessary to comprehend Indian sociology. From this vantage point, Dumont himself has developed a model of Indian civilization in his book *Homo Hierarchicus*, which is based on a non-competitive ritual hierarchical organisation. Dumont bases his critique of the caste system on ancient literature, historical precedents, etc.

◆ Structuralism

Dumont's *Homo Hierarcicus* presents various fresh ideas on social organisation as a study of the Indian caste system. His paradigm includes ideology and tradition on a fundamental level. He has applied structuralism's method to his investigation of the caste system.

◆ The encounter of the binary

Dumont searches for the caste ideology in Indology and the idea of the oneness of Indian civilisation. He describes ideology as "a more or less coherent set of beliefs and values" in his definition. According to him, Indian civilization has a certain philosophy, the elements of which are in binary contrast to Western civilization: modern vs. traditional; holistic versus individualistic; hierarchy versus equality; purity versus pollution; status versus power, etc. The ground for comparison at the level of global ideology inside the particular ideology of the caste system is this contradiction (dialectic). The concepts of purity and pollution are opposed to one another.

◆ Structural analysis

In Dumont's analysis of the caste system, hierarchy plays a crucial role in addition to ideology and structure. The dialectics of hierarchy are also determined by the contrast between pure and impure implied by hierarchy. The relationship between "encompassing" and "being encircled" is also emphasized by hierarchy. The idea of cleanliness in the caste system includes the impure. Dumont's method of studying the caste structure in India sparked a lot of heated discussion as a result.

◆ Caste ideology

Two significant monographs—Hierarchy and Marriage Alliance in South India and Organization Social and Religion of the Pramalai Kallar—were published in 1957 based on extensive fieldwork and careful study of literary sources. The second was written in English and was dedicated to Claude Levi-Strauss, while the first is one of the most comprehensive anthropological studies of India ever published. In some ways, Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* rekindled interest in caste studies in the 1970s. He concentrated on the requirement to comprehend caste ideology as it appears in the classical writings. In order to investigate the caste system and rural social structure in India, Dumont argued for the employment of an indological and structuralist approach. As a result, according to Dumont, "Indian sociology" is the specialised field that sits at the intersection of Indology and sociology and which he promotes as the proper kind of "mix" necessary to understand Indian civilization.



- ◆ Exposure to Western culture

According to the French sociological tradition, Dumont integrates sociology and Indology by highlighting the influence of ideology on shaping human behaviour. Given the tight relationship between sociology and Indology, a sociologist studying the development and evolution of social institutions in India must largely rely on indological sources. Dumont has proposed analysing societal change from a cognitive historical perspective. He views Indian civilization as systems of ideational or value patterns or cognitive structures rather than as systems of relationships. According to Dumont, the study of social change should concentrate on “the reaction of Indian minds to the revelation of Western culture” and how the cognitive system of Indian tradition is reacting with rejection or acceptance under the influence of the cognitive elements of western culture like individualism, freedom, democracy, etc.

- ◆ Hierarchy

The difference between Indian and Western cognitive systems is found in the holistic aspect of the former and the individualised quality of the later. This difference also highlights the tension in India between tradition and modernization. According to Dumont, the fundamental principle underlying the caste system is hierarchy. His approach on caste is primarily structuralist and indological. He saw the caste system as having a religious foundation and being characterised by a mismatch between rank and authority. Dumont’s expertise was primarily gleaned from classical writings. As a result, we classify him as cognitive-historian and Indologist.

1.2.2 G.S.Ghurye

Biographical Sketch



Govind Sadashiv Ghurye (1893-1984) was born on 12th December, 1893 in a Saraswat Brahmin family in Malvan, Maharashtra. He is a towering figure in the intellectual and academic circles for his unique contribution to the field of Indian Sociology. He is considered as one of the main Indian Sociologists in the post-independence period. He is well acclaimed by the critics for the ‘the symbol of sociological creativeness’. M.N. Srinivas once said, “Nothing disguises the fact that Ghurye was a ‘giant’ ”. It is absolutely true to the fact that he promoted and directed the course of research in diverse fields of Indian society.

Ghurye, after his matriculation exam, joined the Elphinstone College, Bombay with Honours. He stood as a topper in the BA examination and was awarded the Bahu Dazi prize which is given for the Sanskrit expertise. In the M.A exam he received the Chancellor's Gold medal. He entered into the study of Indian society with a background of deep knowledge in Sanskrit. During his profession in Elphinstone College, Ghurye submitted an essay to Patrick Geddes on the topic 'Bombay as an urban centre'. This gained him a foreign scholarship instituted by University of Bombay to give support and training to young sociologists.

Sociology in Bombay gained momentum under the leadership of Ghurye. He took charge of Department of Sociology at Bombay University in 1924. He became professor in 1934 and retired in 1959. After retirement he actively engaged in research and assisted 80 students in Ph.D till 1971. The 'second generation' of Indian sociologists like M.N. Srinivas, K.M. Kapadia, I. Karve, K.T. Merchant, I.P. Desai, A.R. Desai, Y.B. Damle, D. Narain, M.S.A. Rao, K.N. Venkatarayappa, A. Bopegamage, M.G. Kulkarni, K.C. Panchnadikar, M.L. Sharma, D.B. Unwalla and many others. Ghurye has mentored a batch of renowned sociologists including M.N.Srinivas.

He initiated the formation of Indian Sociological Society in 1952 and was instrumental in the formation of Sociological Bulletin. The Indian Journal of Sociology was started in January 1920 under the editorship of Alban G. Widgery of Baroda College in Baroda, together with Ghurye. He was the president of the Indian Science Congress in 1934. He has 31 published books during his life time and those are very remarkable as pioneering contributions to the sociology field.

The various writings of Ghurye include:

- ◆ Caste and Race in India (1932)
- ◆ Indian Sadhus (1953)
- ◆ Bharatnatyam and its costume (1958)
- ◆ Family and Kinship in Indo-European culture (1955)
- ◆ Social tensions in India (1968)

- ◆ Cohort of new ideas

In the sociological frontiers of India, Ghurye is the leader. He has frequently received praise for being the "father of Indian Sociology." Ghurye was the first academician to entirely develop the first generation of Indian sociologists during the post-independence era. The Sociological Bulletin and the Indian Sociological Society were both initiated by Ghurye. Due to his efforts to examine Indian society and culture using a variety of approaches, Ghurye is frequently referred to as a "Theoretical Pluralist." He used both the literary and empirical approaches to examine Indian society. Ghurye was first influenced by the diffusionist school of



anthropology until he changed to studying Indian social reality from an ontological and anthropological standpoint.

◆ Local Indology

With a foundation in Sanskrit literature, Ghurye's indological approach is around the study of Indian culture and social structure. He was more influenced by the writings of the Bombay-based Bhandarkar Institute's Indologists than by Sir William Jones' or Max Muller's British publications. He is frequently accused of leaning on local Indology. Ghurye made an effort to carefully combine the Sociology and Indological disciplines.

1.2.2.1 Origin and Features of Caste System

◆ Textual interpretation

Ghurye's *Caste and Race in India* tried to make a reconstruction of a very orthodox traditional and age old social institution of India i.e. caste. In this landmark work he made a long journey from the traditional textual interpretation of caste from Sanskrit literature base to its modern social reality with changing function. According to Ghurye, Sociology of India is not static, it emanates from the ancient India, travels through medieval India and reaches Modern India. Ghurye realized that if an institution cannot be studied in those three distinct phases then we cannot make a claim that we have made a study in totality. A study that is phasal (as per the phases) in nature is fragmented and unplanned. According to Ghurye, an institution should be examined in light of three factors: transition, transplantation, and transformation.

Ghurye's Major Research Areas

1. Caste.
2. Tribe.
3. Kinship.
4. Culture and Civilisation.
5. Religion.
6. Sociology of Conflict and Integration.
7. Family and Marriage.

◆ The superiority of race

Caste is understood by Ghurye from a comparative, historical, and Indological perspective. In contrast to his contemporaries, he views caste as a byproduct of Indian culture that evolves over time rather than glorifying or demonising it. He confirms with Sir Herbert Risley in his book "Caste and Race in India." That caste is a byproduct of race that immigrated to India with the Aryans. Ghurye finds it problematic that the majority of people's perceptions of the caste structure centre on Brahminic dominance. In Indian history, caste has undergone various forms of fusion and fission. Caste during the Vedic era was a byproduct of race. The only way that Aryans separated themselves from non-Aryans was by colour, but as different ethnic groups grew closer to one another, Hindu culture and values spread from the Aryan community to non-Aryan societies. Never did the Aryans claim to be Brahmins or to be a superior race to non-Brahmins.

◆ The racial aspects

The Aryan culture itself practised a variety of jobs that were assigned to various people and households. Caste names were assigned to various groups based on their occupations. As a result, the Aryan society had artisans, soldiers, peasants, and architects. It was also very organised, disciplined, and forward-thinking. According to Ghurye, caste may have actually developed in India with the arrival of the Aryans because they had a different ethnic makeup from Indians. But, previous to the arrival of the Aryans, India was home to a variety of racial groups. One racial group did not exclusively inhabit India.

◆ Caste system and profession

The arrival of the Aryans added another race to those already there. Caste was not an oppressive hierarchical system. The caste system that the Aryans brought with them encouraged discipline and gave them a focus on a particular profession. There was no superior or inferior caste. Change of employment was an option. As a result, Aryans developed into highly specialised natives. Humans looked to the Aryans for advancement. So they began incorporating these themes into their daily lives. The Brahmins, who exalted the Aryan culture, instructed rulers in the virtues of Aryans. The caste system was spread to non-Aryans by these wandering saints.

◆ Social relationships

Caste, according to Ghurye, was the foundation of institutionalised forms of labour division in Aryan culture. The disciplined aspect of Aryan civilization was valued by indigenous rulers who introduced caste features into their social life, as the two communities of Aryans and indigenous



peoples formed interpersonal relationships through communication and warfare. Priests, monks, and wanderers also extolled the merits of the Aryan caste system. Caste therefore spread from northern India to the rest of the nation.

Six distinguishing qualities are used by Ghurye to describe caste in India: Societal segmentation, hierarchy, civil and religious privileges, a lack of unrestricted employment options, prohibitions on food, alcohol, and sexual activity, and endogamy.

a) Segmental division of the society

Segment is the compartmentalization of the population into groups. It is basically horizontal in character. It generates social grouping but not labelling. The membership is ascribed in character, i.e. it is based on birth and flows from generation to generation. Based on the membership every member has fixed status, roles and tasks. According to the roles assigned they have to perform it. There are moral ethics, obligations and justification values behind these roles.

- ◆ Fixation of status and roles

b) Hierarchy

The second key feature of caste that Hindu social order and Indian society enter is through hierarchy. After the society has been segmented, it is organised into a pyramidal structure, which is then referred to as a hierarchy. The placement of social segments in the hierarchy in layer is determined by certain cultural values, such as purity and contamination, the importance of particular groups, and societal preferences. The segment layering is primarily vertical in character. This caste hierarchy is in charge of outlining how caste can be accessed and avoided, and it turns into the main factor for role distribution, duty sharing, and the enforcement of restrictive norms.

- ◆ Obstructive norms

Caste norms are determined by hierarchy. For Ghurye hierarchy becomes the primary factor in determining all of the aforementioned variables. In essence, it alludes to the division of labour. Four categories used to categorise all social activities: religious, governmental, maintenance, and menial. The religious activities are assigned as the highest status in society out of all these activities. Brahmins are therefore given this duty. Governance, which includes managing state affairs and protecting the populace from outside attack, is the second important function. Kshatriya

- ◆ The caste particulars

are given this duty. Vaishyas are responsible for managing the managerial tasks since they must produce income for the community. And while being a necessary component of society, menial tasks are assigned to the lowest important group and are given the shudras.

As a result, the roles are established by the hierarchy. The role and responsibility increase in proportion to rank in the hierarchy. Hierarchy as well determines the person's access to life resources and life chances (education, health, and nutrition) (wealth, power, property). Access gets easier to the higher up ones in the caste structure, and vice versa. Although it was never widely practiced, the caste system consistently violated the idea of dispersing justice. The preferential caste status, not the creative effort, determined the caste rights. In a caste system, rights were never claimed but instead were preferentially enforced on particular castes. Prevention was for lower castes whereas prevalence was for higher castes.

◆ Severity of caste hierarchy

Restrictive laws had a hierarchically structured nature. Each caste had a distinctive culture. It creates its own rules to control the actions, demeanour, perspective, and attitude of its own members. Restrictive laws often have effects on both within- and between-caste relationships. The Shudras were subject to more stringent laws and taboos than other groups. In contrast to the lower castes like the Khatriyas and Vaishyas, restrictive rules were once more strengthened for the upper castes like the Brahmin.

◆ Restrictive laws

c) Civil and religious disabilities

The rigidity of the caste system was manifested through civil and religious disabilities. With these limitations, Ghurye viewed and felt the broad reflection of Hindu social life. While the caste groups covered in it were not all the same, there were differences, the disabilities were common to caste in different parts of the country. The idea of purity and defilement essentially formed the basis for civil and religious disabilities. Privileges were reserved for pure/higher castes while disabilities were for impure and polluted castes.

◆ Hindu social life

d) Lack of unrestricted choice of occupation

Hereditary factors have determined the jobs. They have typically been prohibited from changing their usual jobs. Members of one caste keep their positions of power and secrecy in their workplaces and forbid members of the



- ◆ Caste positions

other caste from participating. While lower classes are not permitted to study religious texts, upper caste individuals like Brahmins are free to do so. Lower-level tasks like laundry, scavenging and bathroom cleaning have been placed for the untouchable category.

e) Restriction on food, drinks and social intercourse

- ◆ 'Kachha' and 'Pakka'

All members of caste are subject to certain rules. In Indian society, there are still many people who are restricted from eating and engaging in sexual activity. There are two food types, Kachha (cooked) and Pakka (raw), upon which certain restrictions are imposed with regard to sharing, for example: "Caste groups from whom twice born caste people can accept Kachha food; "Caste groups from whom twice born caste people can accept Pakka food; "Caste groups from whom twice born caste people can accept water but no food; "Caste groups from whom twice born caste people do not accept water or food and maintain conflict."

f) Endogamy

- ◆ Aspect of sin

Because of caste being the primary factor in endogamy in India, the caste system is also stratified. Endogamy insists the strict law of marrying within the same caste. Disobeying the caste system is viewed as a sin as well as a criminal offense. The caste panchayat not only forbids inter-caste unions but also punishes individuals who violate these laws severely.

- ◆ Conflict of Reality and Ideology

In addition to Ghurye's contributions, it is important to understand the critical response received by his theory. theoreticians observed that Ghurye neglects the development of contemporary India as well as the role played by Islamic and British sultans. India is now very different from what it was during the Vedic and non-Vedic periods; thanks to town planning, architecture, modern government, and technology. Sociologists must respect reality rather than ideology if sociology is a science. Disappointingly Ideology rules over fact in Ghurye's sociology, which is tragic for Indian sociology. According to A.R. Desai, examining India through the prism of culture, leaves us with no room to comprehend the real India, which is characterised by inequality, variety, dialectic, and exploitation. Desai says that, to comprehend the realities of India and the difficulties and issues therewith, one must free themselves from the shackles of Ghurye's sociology.

1.2.3 Irawathi Karve

Biographical Sketch



Irawati Karve was a well-known Indian sociologist, anthropologist, educationist, and prolific writer who was named after the Burma river *Irrawaddy*. Karve was raised in Burma, where her father, Mr. G.H. Karmarkar, worked in a cotton factory, and attended Huzur Paga Boarding School in Pune for her education. After graduating with honours from Fergusson College with a BA in philosophy in 1926, she went on to Bombay University to receive her master's degree in sociology under the tutelage of G.S. Ghurye, one of the founding figures of Indian sociology. *The Chitpavan Brahmans-An Ethnic Study*, a study she conducted on her own caste, was the subject of her thesis under Ghurye. In the interim, she wed Dhinakar Dhondo Karve, a chemistry teacher.

Karve then travelled to Germany in 1928 to complete her doctoral studies and came back two years later. After earning her doctorate, she started working as a registrar at the SNT Women's University, which her father-in-law had founded. She resigned from this position in 1939 in order to work as a sociology instructor at the Deccan College in Pune, where she later rose to the position of head of the sociology and anthropology department. Karve subsequently rose to prominence in India's anthropological field.

She is the author of more than a dozen books, both in English and Marathi. In 1953, her first book, *Kinship and Organization in India*, was released. Karve was respected for her tenacious commitment to research. *Yuganta*, originally written in Marathi and later translated into English by Karve herself, is the most well-known of her writings. She received the Sahitya Akademi Prize for 1968 for her novel. The book is a literary work that takes a historical approach, as opposed to a mythological one, to the principal characters of the Mahabharata. The majority of Karve's caste-related works are confined in her book *Hindu Society: An Interpretation* (1961).

Methodology of Karve

- ◆ Ideology and Ethnology

Karve's methodology stays on the understanding that the study of culture and society was characteristically inter-dependent. To cohesively understand Indian society it is important to study both. There is an interesting chronology for her research priorities. First, she adopted an ideological tradition from her master, G.S. Ghurye. The second is the ethnological tradition, which was evident in the extensive research she did for her works. The third is German physical anthropology, which simply involves tracing the genetics



of different tribes being studied to determine their ancestry. The last two were the outcomes of Karve's love of research: socio-economic analysis and archaeological exploration. Her use of broad survey data to support her assertions as well as her belief that it is crucial to understand the family, caste, religion, and kinship in order to comprehend the foundations of Indian society.

- ◆ Anthropology and field work

Dr. Karve extensively questioned caste systems, familial relationships, religion, mythology, and kinship through her research and writings. Her methodological assertions could be seen in numerous books on these topics in English and Marathi, including *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* (1968), *The Bhils of West Khandesh* (1958), and *Kinship Organization in India* (1953). Dr. Karve, who was a pioneer in anthropological studies, attracted a sizable readership. She conducted extensive research and wrote about a wide range of subjects, including Indian village and township life, folklore, religion, and family.

1.2.3.1 Kinship Organisation in India

- ◆ Patterns related to kinship

Iravati Karve defines the linguistic areas, caste institutions, and family organisation as the most important foundation for understanding the patterns of Kinship in India. She divides the country into northern, central, southern, and eastern zones based on language, caste, and family structure. The Kinship organisation typically follows the linguistic pattern, however language and kinship do not always go together.

- ◆ Changes in kinship structure

Every person interacts with those around them on a regular basis. This is the fundamental framework of all human societies. It is referred to as the system of kinship since it organizes individuals and social groups. Radcliffe Brown placed attention on the study of the kinship system as a component of rights and obligations since he saw it as an element of the social structure. Evans Pritchard's research of the Nuer people in southern Sudan was based on kinship groups; essentially concentrated on a male line of ancestry from the ancestor. Every kinship system has elements of culture. Any kinship system has no special pattern in this world. It frequently varies from one culture to the next.

In India, kinship is evident both inside and between families. Main relatives are those who have close ties to the family, such as first marriages between husband and wife, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, father and sons, etc. All of these belong to the same nuclear family,

◆ Clan and kinship

commonly referred to as the “family of procreation.” There are secondary and tertiary relatives in addition to blood relatives. There are primary relatives in each of the secondary relations. We have “clan exogamy” and “caste endogamy” in India generally. In other instances, the clans have different lineages and different clans. A lineage member’s common ancestor was a well-known and common individual, but the common ancestor of the clan was a supernatural figure. A clan’s members are dispersed among different regions, which prevents them from sharing interests.

◆ Issues of inheritance

Clans provide a framework for business operations, foster group love, and settle marriage eligibility according to a particular position. It is considered that kinship is fundamentally an important component of social organisation and that it also establishes division in terms of property inheritance. There is a cause that undermines the cohesiveness of the lineage and causes disputes among the participants. It is common to see disputes between father and son or sibling rivalry.

◆ Acculturation and accommodation

The four cultural zones are examined using a comparative study by Iravati Karve with the goal of drawing conclusions about the geographical patterns of social behaviour in society. Local patterns in the various areas could vary. Due to the hierarchy, caste separation, and caste division, there are various sorts of caste. Karve is in charge of managing the entire acculturation and accommodation process in the area of kinship. Based on observations, folk literature, ethnic sources, and Sanskrit manuscripts, she examined a period of 3000 years.

Karve gave consideration to the following:

1. Kinship in terms of Indian languages.
2. Behavior and attitudes in the context of language
3. Rules of Descents and inheritance
4. Marriage and family patterns
5. Comparative study on Sanskritic north and Dravidian south

Karve describes the arrangement of the linguistic areas, caste institution, and family organisation as being the most crucial in order to understand the pattern of kinship in India. She divided the country into its central, northern, southern, and eastern regions while taking into account the various languages spoken there, as well as caste and family structure.



◆ Terminology

a. North India and Kinship: We have affinal relationships as well as blood ties in northern India. The terminology for a single age cannot be replaced for those who are from a different generation. There are necessary terms for three ages of close relatives. Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi, Assami, Bihari, Bengali, and Nepali are all spoken in northern India. Clan exogamy, caste endogamy, and sexual taboos between first relationships are all prevalent in these areas.

Here, the *Sasan* rule is observed, according to which a person must avoid marriages to *Sapinda* relatives and cannot marry inside his patrilineal family. Gotras, an exogamous unit, are a feature of Brahmanism. These castes are occasionally divided into exogamous and endogamous gotras as well.

Features of northern kinship in India are:

1. Territorial
2. Taboo-centric
3. Genealogical
4. Exogamous (local)

◆ Rules of marriage

When caste is an issue, endogamy is constrained. Large-scale local marriages are obstructed. In north India, Brahmanas and other upper castes follow the tradition of avoiding gotras that belong to their fathers, mothers, grandmothers, and maternal grandmothers.

b. Kinship and Central India: This region includes the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kathiawad, Chattisgarh, Orissa, and Maharashtra, and its native languages are Rajasthani, Gujarati, Kathiawadi, Oriya, and Marathi. These languages, which are found in northern India, are connected to Sanskrit in some way.

While learning about the northern regions, three key points should be kept in mind.

◆ Connection to Sanskrit language

1. Cross-cousin unions are not allowed in the Northern region.
2. Several castes have emerged from exogamous clans.
3. Exogamous clans are ranked in certain castes according to their hypergamy.

Also, not every region of north India necessarily has all of these points. For instance, Jats in Rajasthan adhere to the

two-gotra and village exogamy laws. Baniyas adhere to the four gotra principles, Rajputs have hypergamous clans, and in this region, the feudal rank of the prospective spouses is an important factor.

◆ Lineage

c. Kinship and South India: Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and other areas with diverse linguistic populations are considered to be parts of south India. The patrilocal and patrilineal systems, as well as matrilineal and matrilocal systems in some locations, make it difficult to examine the southern regions. If we compare kinship in the south and the north, we can conclude that in the south there is no distinction between the family of birth and the family of marriage, but in the north there is a definite difference.

◆ Marriages and Kin

As a result, we can observe that marriages are employed to improve kin connections. In south India, there are two sets of a line that specify which individuals or descents one can marry and which one cannot.

◆ Cross-cousin marriage

d. Kinship and East India: The Eastern region is not compact and lacks clear borders. Together with other languages like Monkhmer and Mundari, northern languages are widely spoken. There are Khmer, Mon, and Chain communities in this area. The patrilocal or patrilineal system is used by people from Mundari linguistic origins. Cross-cousin marriage is permitted in Ho and Santhal, but only while the father's sister or the mother's brother is still alive. Cross-cousin marriage is uncommon. For instance, cross-cousin marriages are not practised among the Bondo people.

◆ Matrilineal system

Although they have a matrilineal system similar to Nayers of Kerala and speak Monkhmer, Khasi people live in Assam. In Nayar's situation, a matrilineal joint family is there, and the husband periodically travels back home. Khasi people live in joint families that share a cemetery and place of worship, but the husband and wife have their own modest home.

Hence, kinship is both the most fundamental tenet of society and a complex component of it. Various kinship systems are practised in different parts of India, and a variety of causes, including migration, education, and mobility, among others, have led to changes in kinship.



Summarised Overview

Indian society is portrayed as being immobile, ageless, and spaceless in the orientalist/Indologist perspective. These academics place more emphasis on the function of customs and groups as the foundation of social relations than on the role of individuals. In addition, they view morality, philosophy, and religion as the pillars of society's structure rather than individual or group dynamics. By utilising their own traditions to understand Indian tradition through texts (from the known to the unknown), the British made the critical mistake of over-emphasising the discrete characteristics of Indian social entities while ignoring the connections that related these entities to form an organic whole. The British were partially to blame for the caste system's rigidity, which became one of its distinguishing characteristics throughout the British era.

Ghurye was unable to recognise that the dynamics of Indian unity in contemporary India have undergone a significant transformation. According to SC Dube, his approach is primarily criticised for having a culturally bounded, text-centric, and Brahmanic perspective on India; however, since the majority of other approaches originated as reflexive critiques of Ghurye's writings, his influence on Indian sociology cannot be disregarded. He also failed to recognise that caste involvement in politics in contemporary India as a result of the process of collective mobilisation.

Dumont's concept of caste as a logically coherent set of principles (ideology) has also come under scrutiny. In his focus on values, Dumont appears to have overlooked the numerous protest groups that arose throughout Indian history that questioned the caste system's ideology. He was unable to see how caste relationships were contentious. For him, the relationships between the varnas are almost complementary, especially those between the Brahmin and the Khsatriya.

Assignments

1. Bring out the major points in the work *Homo Hierarchicus* by Louis Dumo.
2. What do you mean by the notions impure and pure?
3. What are the focus areas of G S Ghurye?
4. Narrate the peculiarities of kinship studies by Karve
5. Discuss on the sociological work of Louis Dumont
6. Do you think that the Indological method has limitations?
7. Point out the critical responses to Ghurye's and Dumont's theory?
8. What is the scope of Indology in the current society?
9. Why did Louis Dumont discuss about *pure* and *impure* while studying caste system in India?



Suggested Readings

1. Mukherjee, R. K. (1973), *Indian Sociology: Historical Development and Present Problems*, New Delhi: Sociological Bulletin.
2. Vidhyarathi, L. P. (1972), *Tribal Ethnography in India, A Survey of Researchers in Social Anthropology and Sociology*, New Delhi: ICSSR

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1. Desai, A. R. (1994). *Rural Sociology in India*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.
2. Desai, A. R. (1957). *Srinivas, MN and Others" India's Villages"* (Book Review). India: Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics.
3. Srinivas, M. N. (1995). *Social Change in Modern India*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan.
4. Etienne, G. (1993). M. N. Srinivas, *On Living in a Revolution and Other Essays*. France: Revue Tiers Monde
5. Srinivas, M. N. (1976). *The Remembered Village* (No. 26). California: University of California Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Structural - Functional Approach

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the basic idea of structural functional approach
- ◆ comprehend the important works of M. N Srinivas
- ◆ understand the concept of *Village society* introduced by S.C Dube

Background

The macro-level structural functionalist theory describes society as a complex system. It represents society as a mosaic of interrelated parts, encompassing enormous social systems and organisations. Furthermore, structural functionalism explains how each component of society has a specific function. Though it no longer serves as a useful explanatory framework, structural-functionalism nonetheless has a strong theoretical base. Understanding how each component of society contributes to social cohesion and stability is quite popular.

The structural-functionalist approach in anthropology, which aims to explain the many social structures present in tribal communities in terms of their contributions to social cohesiveness, is closely related to sociological functionalism. Supporters of this viewpoint concentrate on comprehending the “ordering” and “patterning” of the social world. Their primary area of interest is society’s “problem of order.” They have typically built their theoretical and empirical investigations on the premise that societies may be thought of as enduring, cohesive, stable, typically hereditary wholes that can be distinguished by their culture and social structural arrangements.

Keywords

Configuration, Function, Structure, Pattern, Sanskritisation



Discussion

◆ Co-existence of parts

How do certain institutions or traditions start? What role does it play in the bigger picture? How do the components and the whole relate? According to this point of view, Sociologist A.R. Radcliffe-Brown argues that a society's total social structure and usages make up a functional unity, a state in which all components coexist in a state of sufficient internal coherence or harmony. Furthermore, a functional analysis that connected the parts with the framework of the culture as a whole was necessary in order to explain any belief, rule, custom, or institution.

◆ Functional unity

In contrast to conflict and contradiction, this view of society places more emphasis on the elements of harmony and consistency. In terms of social order, a system's functional unity is described. The structural-functional definition of society makes the assumption that everything inside the system must be functional for it to work as a whole. They hold the view that society is a configuration of elements that tends to survive through time, and that consensus is a crucial component of the social system. It views adjustments to changes as a gradual, cumulative process. Its explanation basically necessitates pointing out how the various activity kinds stack on top of one another, are consistent with one another, and how conflicts are managed to avoid them from affecting the overall process.

1.3.1 M.N.Srinivas

Biographical Sketch



Mysore Srinivas Narasimhachar or M.N.Srinivas was born in Mysore in 1916 and died in Bangalore in 1999. He was regarded as one of the top Indian sociologists. He belonged to the Brahmin caste. His research focuses on caste and its various categories, Sanskritization, and a range of other themes associated with caste. He graduated from the University of Bombay with a degree in sociology. Srinivas enrolled in Oxford University's graduate programme in the late 1940s. He began to raise sociological concepts there and played a vital influence in doing so.

Srinivas' viewpoint was distinct from that of another sociologist since he refused to use a western textbook to research the citizens of his own nation. As a result, he took part and began by making observations and conducting fieldwork. He

conducted a significant field study on the Coorgs between 1940 and 1942. He goes on to discuss the harmony and interaction between the various castes that are present in Coorg. Brahmins, Kaniyas, Bannas, and Panikas were the castes he covered. He also talks about the several autonomous castes that exist in rural areas.

Srinivas spent the majority of his time studying caste and religion. He discussed every facet of the dominant caste and religion in society. The words dominant castes, westernisation, secularisation, and sanskritization were created by him. All of this was a result of the caste system. Being a member of the higher Brahmin caste, Srinivas never thought twice about making caste system his primary topic of study. He provided numerous research demonstrating the impact of caste in both rural and urban settings. He divided these ideas into two categories in order to help people understand the idea of society :the book view; and the field view.

◆ The method of fieldwork

The new field of structural-functional analysis in sociology and social anthropological research in India was pioneered by M.N. Srinivas. By incorporating ideas from biological sciences into sociology; structural-functionalism is introduced. In biology, an organism's structure is defined as a comparatively stable configuration of relationships between numerous cells and the outcomes of the activity of the many organs in the life process of the organism. M.N.Srinivas finds that the two key ideas in contemporary British social anthropology- structure and function; indicate that every society is a whole and that its diverse components are interconnected. In other words "the many groups and categories that make up a society are related to one another. The structural-functional perspective can also be referred to as a "contextual" or "field view" perspective on social phenomena because it depends more heavily on the field work tradition for understanding social reality.

◆ Triangle of restrictions

Social scientists have examined Indian social reality using social categories including caste, class, tribe, and religious and linguistic communities. The same categories have been employed to gain insight into how society is changing. The triangle of endogamy, hierarchy, and pollution is believed to be dissolving presently, contrary to past claims that the caste system keeps Indian society as a closed system.

The issue of social mobility and the social stratification system are closely related. According to Yogendra Singh, the tradition-modernity divide in social mobility research



- ◆ The division of tradition and modernity

frequently causes an overlapping of interests. Western academics were discovered to be so confused. They claimed as a result that the closed (ascriptive-oriented) social stratification system of old India's social system prevented mobility. This merely demonstrates the academics' ideological predisposition. Although traditional Indian society was immobile in nature, M.N. Srinivas and others have noted that this did not prevent caste from moving up and down the local hierarchy. According to Surajit Sinha (1957), several tribal people in India rose to the status of royalty by making a claim to the Kskatriyakood region through invasion and power-building.

- ◆ Social mobility and renunciation

In India, Silverberg has discussed how renunciation might lead to social mobility. Renunciation was required of the twice-born castes under the Ashramas system. In reality, however, many of the lower castes also used to renounce their status in society and become sanyasins (mendicants/monks) to escape the hardships of their own position. Social mobility as a process has picked up steam recently. It has been explained by M.N. Srinivas using the westernisation and sanskritization processes. Social mobility has also been observed by Rajni Kothari, Louis Dumont, and McKim Marriott at various levels. The caste system as a whole seeks mobility through attaining political power or through the process of caste politicisation. On the one hand, people of lower castes work to advance their social standing within the caste system.

Srinivas has considered caste mobility in various levels:

(i) By means of warfare

- ◆ Acquiring territory

Caste mobility during the Mughal era was referred by M.N. Srinivas and Pauline Kolenda. According to Kolenda, up until the British unification in the early half of the nineteenth century, acquiring territory by conquest or peaceful occupation of lightly populated or empty areas was the most efficient way to advance in the caste system. According to historian K. M. Panikkar, "every known royal family has descended from a non-Kshatriya caste since the fifth century B.C." Kshatriyas were the ruling class in ancient India, according to Kolenda. However, a few peasant jati kings had built kingdoms after conquering new land. After taking power, the conquering peasants claimed to be Kshatriyas. As a result, the conquering peasants attained Kshatriya status.

◆ The caste status

M. N. Srinivas used Shivaji during the Mughal era as an example. Father of Shivaji was a vassal or jagirdar of the Muslim sultan of Bijapur (in modern Maharashtra). Shivaji created his own empire from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal after overthrowing the Mughals. His Maratha caste was regarded as belonging to the *Sudra varna*. Shivaji underwent a religious process of transformation into Kshatriyahood as a result. Shivaji gained varna status, and his caste, the Marathas, also attained Kshatriya status.

(ii) By assisting authorities

◆ Caste mobilisation through service

Higher varna rank was acquired by jatis whose members served either Hindu or non-Hindu kings. For instance, the Sudra vama Patidars of Gujarat supported the Gaekwad Maratha rulers of Central Gujarat who were Shivaji's Maratha ancestors. They gradually built their own little governments while posing as Kshatriyas. The Kayasthas, a caste of scribes (who, prior to the discovery of printing, were professional letter-writers, who created copies of writing, or who kept records), are another example of a caste rising via service to monarchs. The Mughals were the first to benefit from the Kayasthas' services before the British kings.

◆ 'Twice-born' category

By the nineteenth century, the Kayastha caste in Northern India had advanced to the "twice-born" category from their low caste status in the twelfth century, but the Kayastha caste in Bengal further to the East had remained Sudras. According to historian Burton Stein (1968), families in mediaeval South India rose to power through cultivating relationships with Muslim sultans. The family or a group of households served as the unit of mobility rather than the caste (jati). According to Srinivas, this type of familial advancement led to the creation of a new jati from an older, larger one.

(iii) Through various levels of census commissioners

◆ Higher social status

From 1891 to 1931, when jati identities were recorded in census enumerations, many middle and low caste individuals made an attempt to be registered as members of the twice-born varnas. When Herbert Risley, the Census Commissioner, attempted to rate all castes, these accusations peaked. Numerous jatis attempted to guarantee a higher status by asserting high varna titles. For instance, the *Teli* (oil pressers) desired to be termed Vaishyas, whilst the Bengali Kurmi cultivators wanted to be Kurmi Kshatriyas. Each assertion was supported by mythological and historical



evidence. District committees were formed to assess the claims; while some were upheld, the majority were denied.

(iv) Through social transformations such as Westernisation and Sanskritization

- ◆ Reformations 

Caste members had a fixed status at all times thanks to a number of constraints, including hereditary membership, endogamy, the denial of professional mobility, commensal and social restrictions, etc. The caste system had grown so rigorous over the Brahmanical, Muslim, and British periods. However, as the twentieth century progressed, the processes of industrialization, urbanization, the spread of education, the adoption of some legislative measures, and the social movements of various social reformers made it impossible for the caste system to continue to be rigid.

- ◆ Caste mobility 

In 1952, M.N. Srinivas used the westernisation and sanskritization processes to explain caste status mobility. He argued that by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, a low caste could move up in the hierarchy within a generation or two. It abandoned certain of the Brahmins' own practices that were deemed impure and adopted the rituals, customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins.

- ◆ Elite imitation 

At first, Srinivas suggested that lesser castes adopt the Brahmin way of life, but later he said that dominant castes of any high varna should be imitated. Lynch refers it as 'Elite emulation.' Emulation of the Brahmin and Kshatriya way of life has been referred to as the "kingly model" by Barnett. As a result, a socially ascent strove to elevate itself by sanskritization, "elite imitation," or "kingly imitation." Untouchables, according to M.N. Srinivas are unable to cross the Sudra caste boundary and enter a "higher" caste.

A few details on the sanskritization process are as follows:

(1) Economic and political dominance have been incorporated with the process of sanskritization, emphasising the part played by the local dominant caste in this process. Thus, although the lower castes initially imitated Brahmins, they soon began to mimic the local dominating caste, which was a non-Brahmin caste.

(2) Sanskritization took place in castes with strong political and economic standing but low rankings in terms of ritual importance, meaning that there was a disconnection between their ritual and political and economic standings.



(3) Improvement in the economy is not a requirement for sanskritization.

(4) Sanskritization is a collaborative effort. A caste not only “took” from the caste above it, but it also “gave” something back to the caste.

(5) The group, not the person or the family, is the unit of mobility.

(6) The sanskritization process has weakened since independence. Instead of horizontal movement, upward mobility is now prioritised.

(7) Sanskritization typically uses cultural, rather than structural, explanations to describe societal change.

(8) The group does not necessarily obtain a greater status as a result of Sanskritization. For an indeterminate amount of time, the group must wait to advance in status.

(9) Changing a polluting profession, abstaining from beef and alcohol, and embracing Sanskrit practices, beliefs, and deities do not guarantee progress for lower castes. These activities might not be intended to promote mobility.

◆ Rise in Social Consciousness

Sanskritization has been made possible by industrialization, occupational mobility, developed communication methods, the growth of literacy, western technology. There is a rise in consciousness among the lower castes to abandon harmful vocations and harmful habits and social practices. The separation of ritual deeds from the accompanying mantras (citations), which aided in the dissemination of Brahmanical rituals, is one reason, according to Srinivas, that has contributed to the spread of sanskritization.

◆ Subjective perspective

Social mobility has also been made possible by the westernisation movement, along with sanskritization. Westernization is the transformation of a non-western society's ideology, values, institutions, and technology as a result of extensive cultural interaction with the west. The emphasis on technology and rationalism is a key aspect of “Westernization.” Scholars that favour “modernization” over “westernization” include Daniel Lerner, Harold Gould, Milton Singer, and Yogendra Singh. However, Srinivas views this concept of modernization as “subjective.”

The following are challenges for using the sanskritization process to explain social mobility:



(1) In some regions of the nation (such as Punjab and the old Sind), castes adopted Islamic tradition rather than Sanskrit tradition. The Hindu legacy and the Sufi and mystic elements of Islam were combined to become Sikhism.

(2) The acceptance of non-sanskritic tradition is not taken into account by sanskritization.

(3) Only in Indian society (where the caste system is present) does Srinivas' process (of sanskritization) explain social mobility (and also social transformation). It serves no use in other communities.

(v) By use of politics

◆ Ways for improving life

In an effort to improve in life or accomplish their objectives, certain castes have turned to politics. Eleanor Zelliott defines politics as a way to obtain governmental benefits and representation on political and legislative bodies. The Mahars of Maharashtra, the Kshatriyas of Gujarat, the Nadars of Tamil Nadu, the Reddys and Kammas of Andhra Pradesh, are a few instances that can be used to illustrate this connection.

◆ Political force

The Mahars of Maharashtra, who make up around 10% of the state's population (out of the total scheduled caste population of 13%), initially lived in socially deplorable conditions but eventually turned to politics to improve their social situation. In order to achieve the political objectives of social equality and social mobility, Ambedkar grouped them into a political force and established the Scheduled Caste Federation.

◆ Caste and profession

Mahars, who were considered to be untouchable, performed a variety of jobs, including sweeping roads, delivering death notices to distant villages, and acting as watchmen. They were prohibited from entering temples, schools, and wells. They later began working in factories, railroads, ports, ammunition factories, etc. starting in the 1860s. Even people who resided in villages abandoned the conventional low-paying jobs. A sizable number also enlisted in the military. They were exposed to western culture while serving in the military, which also assisted them in moving up the social scale. A Mahar regiment was also established during World War II.

Some Mahars became Christians, while others joined the egalitarian Kabir and Ramadi panths (sects). Their attempt to enter the temple in 1936 evolved into a political movement

◆ Religious conversions

that completely rejected Hinduism under the direction of Ambedkar. Ambedkar founded the Independent Labour Party in 1937, which awarded Mahars the majority of its tickets. Since then, the Mahars have established themselves as a significant political force in Maharashtra politics through the Republican Party as well as through the Parliament and Vidhan Sabha elections in 1946, 1951, and 1956.

◆ Solidarity and economic reliance

Rajni Kothari and Rushikesh Maru have provided examples of some middle and lower castes, as well as groups of economically struggling peasants, who united into a common organisation in Gujarat in the late 1940s and early 1950s in order to gain political power. After defeating the Congress in elections, they were 'admitted' into the Kshatriya community. Politics served as a unifying factor for them as a result. Robert Hardgrave Jr. investigated the cohesive political culture and sense of community among Tamil Nadu's Nadars. This caste (Nadars) experienced a new sense of solidarity as a result of the reduction in their economic reliance on other castes and the expansion of caste relations across a large geographic area, which improved their social, economic, and political standing. They asserted their Kshatriya status after improving their economic situation.

◆ Democratization

In the 1921 census, every Nadar was identified as a "Nadar Kshatriya." One of the most economically and politically successful communities in the south today, is the Nadars. All of these instances illustrate how members of lower castes have utilised politics to advance their social status in society, gain political clout, foster caste unity, and more. Three perspectives on social mobility have been identified by K.L. Sharma: structural-historical, marxist, and culturological or indological. By citing the replacement of the previous, urban-dominated political leadership with a new group of leaders selected from advanced rural components, widespread political consciousness, and the democratisation of politics, A.R. Kamat has utilised the first approach to explain caste mobility in Maharashtra.

Arvind Das and Pradhan H. Prasad analysed the class-caste scenario of inter-caste conflicts in Bihar using the marxist methodology. The end of the jajmani system, the introduction of modern occupations, the abolition of untouchability and the pollution-purity principle, as well as state policies of protective discrimination and social movements, have all been used to explain social mobility.



1.3.2 S. C. Dube

Biographical Sketch



In India, Shyama Charan Dube is regarded as a leading anthropologist and sociologist. S.C. Dube, who was born on July 25th, 1922, in Narsinghpur, Madhya Pradesh, died on February 4th, 1996, at the age of 73. Dube earned his master's degree in political science from Nagpur University before starting his studies among the Kamar, a tribe of nomadic farmers in Madhya Pradesh. He gained notoriety for using the structural-functional approach to examine the Indian village community. Although he acknowledges the Indian village's semi-autonomous nature, he does not think of it as "static, timeless, and changeless."

He thought it was hard to assert that any one hamlet was typical of rural India because it couldn't be in its own cultural context. His research on *Shamirpet village* describes the social, economic, and ritual structures as well as daily life at the family level.

Both in India and internationally, he has lectured on social anthropology and sociology at universities. He began working for himself as a lecturer at Bishop College in Nagpur, Maharashtra. Later, he joined Lucknow University's Political Science Department.

His interactions with D.N. Majumdar, with whom he helped in the early phases of the journal *Eastern Anthropologist's* publication, helped him further in doing anthropological readings when he was teaching there. He also had the book on *Kamar* published around this time.

S.C. Dube, who is primarily a Lucknow native, was crucial in his investigation on India's shifting villages. His later writings, such as *The Study of Complex Cultures* (1965), *Explanation and Management of Changes* (1971), and *Contemporary India and its Modernization* (1974), continued to demand accuracy in theoretical formulations and empirical verification of these propositions while maintaining the same macro-perspective insight into India's social reality.

- ◆ Multi faceted researcher

Dube has always been an enthusiastic promoter of an interdisciplinary approach and an advocate for research interest. He was therefore capable of seeing things from several angles, which is a reflection of his multifaceted personality. Yogesh Atal speaks of Dube's personality, saying: "Dube has always been on the go, both intellectually and geographically. He chose the difficult task of exploring new terrain and expanding the frontier of knowledge rather than repeating the same theme and focusing on a small expertise."



1.3.2.1 Village Society

- ◆ Descriptive - Exploratory work

The fact that Dube's Indian Village (1955) was the first comprehensive study of a village social structure made it a noteworthy work in the post-1950 era. Dube's work served as a model for descriptive-exploratory accounts of a number of other macro-settings that would later be investigated because it clearly captured the social structure and institutions of rural areas in his signature lucid manner. However, he made no analytical contributions and did not suggest a different conceptual framework for understanding Indian rural society.

- ◆ Structural functional work

Another work by Dube, titled "Indian Village," which was initially published in 1955, marked a turning point in the study of Indian society. He made an important addition to our knowledge of Indian society by using a structural-functional lens in this work.

- ◆ Units of village

Dube's writing is clear and captures the essence of life in an Indian village in the book. He claims that one must look at the numerous units by which the village community is organised while looking at the hamlet he chose for his study.

- ◆ In-depth study

Through his research, S. C. Dube provided in-depth descriptions of village social life and dispelled the colonial regime's notion that villages were fundamentally independent.

- ◆ Status disparity

Religion and caste, income, position in the government service and village organization, age, and unique personality qualities were the six elements that S.C. Dube identified to study status disparity in the village community of Shamirpet. It was difficult to try to attain a better ceremonial status. The group was required to negotiate it with the local political system. Dube emphasised how the caste panchayats of the lower or menial castes functioned as unions to ensure their employment and bolster their bargaining position with the dominant castes who owned the land.

- ◆ Gender problems

For Srinivas, a woman's social environment was her home and her kinship group, but a male lived in a more diverse society. Dube saw that women were isolated from the activities taking place in the public space in the Telangana hamlet. Women who walked with their eyes lowered were viewed as being respectable. The patriarchy's rules were unambiguously stated. The most significant factor that determined the division of labour in the hamlet,



after caste, was gender. The lines between masculine and feminine interests were distinct.

- ◆ Domestic economy
- The two groups of occupations were not only divided but also perceived as unequal, Srinivas noted. The individual was in charge of managing the domestic economy. At harvest, he distributed the annual grain payments to the castes of artisans and servants who had laboured for him throughout the year. Women were viewed by the majority of men as being unable to comprehend life outside the home.

- ◆ Inductive approach
- In order to comprehend Indian reality, Dube (1965) advocated a more thorough frame of reference for the study of “complex cultures.” He used a deductive-positivist method based on null situations, such as “no change in modern India” or “India’s unchanging villages,” as opposed to an inductive-inferential approach.

- ◆ C.D.P
- Due in large part to the Government of India’s adoption of the Community Development Programme (CDP), and Dube’s interest in rural studies expanded significantly. His second groundbreaking work, India’s Changing Villages (1958), which reflected this, called for a change from “structure” to “change” in India’s villages.

S. C. Dube’s Main Works

1. The Kamar; Indian Village (1955)
2. India’s Changing Villages (1958)
3. Institution Building for Community Development (1968)
4. Contemporary India and Its Modernization (1974)
5. Tribal Heritage of India (1977)
6. Understanding Society (1977)
7. Modernization and Development (1988)
8. Tradition and Development (1990)
9. Understanding Change (1990)
10. Indian Society (1990)

◆ Field work

The Village study was interdisciplinary in character. In 1951–1952, the Social Service Extension Project of Osmania University, under the direction of Dube, sponsored and funded it. Nearly 25 miles from Hyderabad, in the village of Shamirpet, the study was carried out. There were 2,494 people living in the village, including 340 Muslims and 19 ethnic Hindu groups. The field data were gathered from historical, geographical, political, and sociological viewpoints on various social, economic, and religious practises in an Indian hamlet, which reflect a comprehensive view of the village.

◆ Web of village life

On the same lines as Robert Redfield's initial village study in Mexico in 1930, Dube discusses a Deccan village in India in 1955. Many of his conclusions might offer the first glimpse into the complex web of village life in India. No hamlet in India is entirely free and independent, he says, because it is always a component of a larger social system and a structured political society. A person is not just a part of their village; they also belong to a caste, a religion, or a tribe that spans a larger geographic area and includes multiple villages. These units are independently governed and subject to punishment.

◆ Functionality

Despite being one of the earliest monographs on villages, the research provides a thorough picture of how village institutions function. According to Dube, the caste system's functional specialization, interdependence, and occupational mobility are the primary pillars of rural India's economic structure. Additionally, he notes that the Deccan Plateau's Hindus mix their nationalistic components of traditional Hinduism with their local religious practises.

The community celebrates three main types of religious services and festivals. As follows:

1. Family rituals
2. Community and family celebrations in the village, and
3. Interaction between Muslims and Hindus during holidays.

Dube gives a brief overview of stereotypes, intergroup relations, intercaste attitudes, and worldview. In a generalised village biography, he also examines the three most important life stages, namely childhood, youth, and old age.



1.3.2.2 Indian Village: Organization, Goals, and Change

- ◆ Village of Shamirpet


In Andhra Pradesh, on the Deccan Plateau of India, roughly 25 miles from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Dube undertook a descriptive study of the village Shamirpet. It is a product of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology's Social Service Extension Project. He primarily used a structural-functional approach in order to convey a comprehensive image of Indian village life.

The following topics are covered in the book:

 1. **The environment**, which comprises a description of the town, its residents, their housing arrangements, the neighbourhood, etc.
 2. **Social structure**, which consists of:
 - Organisation within and between castes and villages. Every caste practises endogamy, and there is a definite social division between them. People on higher levels typically turn down food offered by those on lower levels. Each caste's occupation is monopolised and approved by religion. Dube discovered that people from different castes are connected by shared morals and duties.
 - a. Muslims and Hindus are two separate communities that uphold their unique socio-religious identities.
 - b. The village's internal organisation into two distinct entities, namely the administrative organisation of government and semi-government officials and the socio-religious organisation. He watches ladies engaging in the following five activities: domestic work, agriculture, festivals and ceremonies, birth, marriage, and death, as well as village politics and administration.
- ◆ Shared customs

- ◆ Organisational framework

- ◆ Agricultural economy


The additional activities include fishing, hunting,

- ◆ Village jobs  gathering fruits, medicinal plants, roots, tubers, and barks. Villagers work in a variety of non-agricultural jobs, such as that of a potter, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a barber, a washerman, and a menial servant, among others.
- ◆ Super-natural world  **4. Religious structure:** Folklore, myths, religious instruction from saints and poets, encounters with people who are familiar with the Bible and other popular religious texts, animism, polytheism, and even monotheism, as well as beliefs in ghosts, demons, witches, and magic are all included in the ritual structure. "The complex of these varied factors constitutes the picture of the supernatural world," according to Dube.
- ◆ Interpersonal relations  **5. The family structure** is reflected in the web of links inside the family. The major feature of rural India is the patrilineal and patrilocal nuclear or joint family unit. Dube also discusses the dynamics of the family's interpersonal relationships.
- 6. The Standard of Living:** The division of labour in terms of labour and diet, standard of living, and status differences within the community are all examined in relation to the people's levels of living. He acknowledged the following six aspects that affect how status is differentiated:
 - (i) Caste and religion
 - (ii) Ownership of land
 - (iii) Wealth
 - (iv) A post in a village organisation or government
 - (v) Age
 - (vi) Different personality traits

When it comes to standard of life, Dube divides people into four perception-based levels, which they identify as (i) rich, (ii) well-to-do, (iii) average, and (iv) poor. Additional indicators of a person's style of life include their type of home, their goods in the home, their attire, and their ornaments are also considered.
- ◆ Mutual trust  Dube emphasised how several social structures, including social, economic, ritualistic, and political ones, shaped the village. Additionally, the components of various social systems are linked at both the individual and higher order levels to foster camaraderie and agreement among the villagers.

Summarised Overview

Since the 1940s till the end of the 20th century, the structural-functional approach has dominated the study of Indian society. In order to comprehend the distinctive features of Indian culture, sociologists and social anthropologists studying Indian society have extensively analysed the caste and village systems. The structural-functional method to studying Indian society may be credited to three Indian scholars: G. S. Ghurye, M. N. Srinivas, and S. C. Dube. According to structural-functionalists, castes are important components of Indian society and together they make up the social structure. McKim Marriott, I.P. Desai, D.N. Majumdar, and others are notable proponents of this viewpoint.

Applying the structural functionalist theory to society reveals how interconnected everything is. Maintaining the balance and safety of society is everyone's responsibility. And any rapid change or alteration may stop it from working properly. For classical theorist Durkheim, understanding social differentiation, social stability, and cultural evolution requires an understanding of structural functionalist theory. Parson's theories on structure and process, on the other hand, are based on the practical applications that every social situation requires. The structural functionalist theory has certain advantages as a theory even though it is not very applicable to the present world.

S.C. Dube has contributed on a variety of themes including tribes, rural life, community development, and modernization, management of change and tradition and development over the next 30 years. In a way, he has written on many aspects of Indian society and culture.

Assignments

1. Explain the village structure proposed by S.C Dube
2. What do you understand about the structural functional approach?
3. "Dube emphasised how several social structures, including social, economic, ritualistic, and political ones, shaped the village." How did he do it?
4. Critically discuss about M.N Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization
5. Why is Dube's study on Indian villages still relevant?
6. Describe the complex web of village society as described by Srinivas and Dube

Suggested Readings

1. Gupta, D. (2000). *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
2. Singh, Y. (1986). *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. New Delhi: Penguin books
3. Kothari, R. (Ed.). (1995). *Caste in Indian Politics*. Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan

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4. Dhanagare, D. N. (1993). *Themes and Perspectives in Indian Sociology*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications.
5. Gupta, D. (2000). *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.
6. <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/sociology/biography-of-shy-ama-charan-dube-and-his-contribution-towards-sociology/35020>



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Approaches to the Study of Indian Society II

BLOCK-02



Civilisational Approach

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ expose relevance of cultural approach in explaining Indian society
- ◆ narrate the contributions of Surajit Sinha on Tribal Caste and Peasant continuum
- ◆ understand about N K Bose's interest in the civilisation and culture of India

Background

Imagine you're traveling through the rural heartland of India, visiting remote villages tucked away in the hills and forests. As you make your way through these communities, you notice that each one has its own unique culture, language, and traditions. The people you meet are friendly and hospitable, eager to share their stories and experiences with you. But you also sense that there's something more going on beneath the surface, something that's hard to put into words. This is where the cultural approach comes in. It's a way of looking at human societies and cultures that emphasises the importance of understanding the underlying beliefs, values, and practices that shape people's lives. It's not just about studying the surface-level differences between different cultures, but about getting at the deeper meaning and significance of those differences. One scholar who has applied the cultural approach to the study of Indian civilisation and tribal societies is Surajit Sinha. Sinha argues that too often, tribal societies are seen as primitive and backward, lacking in culture or sophistication. But this couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, tribal cultures are often incredibly rich and diverse, with their own unique customs, rituals, and art forms.

For example, consider the Warli people of Maharashtra, who have a distinct style of painting that uses simple geometric shapes and patterns to depict scenes from everyday life. These paintings are not just beautiful works of art, but also reflect the Warli's deep connection to nature and their sense of community and solidarity. Similarly, the Bihu dance of Assam is a vibrant and energetic celebration of the changing seasons, with its roots in the ancient tribal cultures of the region. By using the cultural approach, Sinha is able to



appreciate the richness and complexity of tribal cultures, and to see them as active contributors to Indian civilisation rather than passive recipients of it. He also recognises the ways in which tribal societies have challenged and resisted dominant cultural norms and power structures, often through forms of cultural expression and activism. By studying these interactions and influences, we can gain a deeper understanding of the diversity and richness of human cultures, and the complex ways in which they shape and are shaped by one another.

The idea of a civilisation is not without controversy. Some scholars argue that it is an inherently Western concept that fails to appreciate the diversity and complexity of non-Western cultures. Others point out that the idea of a civilisation can be used to justify hierarchies of power and oppression, with certain societies and cultures seen as inherently superior to others. This is where the civilisational view put forth by N K Bose comes in. Rather than seeing civilisations as fixed and static entities, Bose argues that we should view them as dynamic and constantly evolving. He emphasises the importance of understanding the cultural and intellectual achievements that have defined different civilisations over time, and the ways in which they have interacted and influenced one another. By taking this view, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexity and richness of human history, and recognise the importance of cross-cultural exchange and interaction. We can also avoid the pitfalls of ethnocentrism and cultural superiority, and instead celebrate the diversity and complexity of human cultures and civilisations.

Keywords

Cultural autonomy, Patrilineal, Endogamous, Cultural economy, Unity and diversity

Discussion

A civilisational perspective refers to a society's understanding of its own civilisation, which is a complex and culturally rich society that has progressed beyond basic subsistence. This perspective distinguishes civilisation from hunter-gatherer and horticultural societies, which are often seen as less developed. The process of civilisation involves changes in the structure and culture of society. The civilisational perspective encompasses the study of various cultures, including tribal, rural, and urban cultures. It also sees civilisation as an organisation of experts in a



- ◆ Study of various cultures

functional relationship with society as a whole. Thus, the civilisational perspective involves the study of several topics, such as classical and medieval texts, administrative records, the village, caste, unity, and diversity. The aim is to analyse the structural foundations of any civilisation and obtain a historically framed portrait of religion, caste, village, state formation, land relations, and other relevant factors. Supporters of this perspective assert that a social system, nation, or civilisation must be understood in historical-civilisational terms, and that census-based surveys must be conducted to understand civilisation's cultural characteristics, essence, and communication.

2.1.1 Surajit Sinha



Surajit Chandra Sinha was born in the Bengal Presidency as the eldest son of Maharaja Bhupendra Chandra Sinha of Susang, who belonged to the Presidency College, Calcutta. His lineage could be traced back to the reign of Emperor Jahangir. His paternal relatives had the ancestry of Communist Party. Sinha was influenced by the Communist traces of his paternal uncle. His education was in a high school in Mymensingh and at Ballygunge Government High School, Calcutta. He started his college education in physics at Presidency College, Calcutta. He was lucky enough to get N. K Bose as his mentor during his Masters' degree. Sinha completed his Ph.D in anthropology Northwestern

University in Illinois, United States on a Fulbright Scholarship. He got training in the fieldwork of social anthropology at Calcutta University. Tarak Chandra Das first introduced Sinha to the community studies of Bhumi community. He chose the state of Bihar for his doctoral work.

He held a number of academic and administrative posts like deputy director and director of the Anthropological Survey of India in Calcutta. He served as an advisor of the then Indian prime minister, Indira Gandhi. He served as the professor of anthropology at the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. He was also equipped as the 'upacharya' of Visva Bharati, Santiniketan. After his professional retirement he became the second director of the Indian Council of Social science Research sponsored Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

Surajit Sinha is well known for his works in social and cultural anthropology. He continued community level field work in India especially among Tribes. His work '*Religion in an Affluent society*' became notable for its

cultural contribution. Surajit Sinha's articles like '*Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum in Central India*'(1965), '*State formation and Rajput myth in Tribal Central India*'(1962) and '*Bhumij-Kshatriya social movement in south Manbhum* (1959) are notable contributions to Indian anthropology.

He viewed tribes and castes not as separate and isolated social and cultural categories but as parts of the greater Indian civilisation in an evolutionary scheme under which formation of the early states in India took place. Sinha is considered as a pioneering historical anthropologist of India because of his research skills of combining field and archival data in a very early period of Indian anthropology.

Surajit Sinha carried out extensive fieldwork with the Bhumij tribe in Bengal and Bihar, and his work focused on three topics. They are as follows;

- i. *Tribe-Caste and Tribe-Peasant Continuum*
- ii. *Levels of Economic Initiatives and Ethnic Groups*
- iii. *Sociology of Religion*

◆ Sinha's anthropological revelations

Sinha's anthropological research revealed that Indian civilisation followed a similar trajectory to the less-developed tribes of the Indian subcontinent. He also identified commonalities between transactional tribal cultures, peasant cultures, and Redfield's nation-peasant-urban continuum. Sinha proposed several concepts, including the "tribal-peasant continuum," the "Bhumij-Ksatriya continuum," and the "tribal-Rajaput continuum," which provide a framework for understanding the transformation between tribes and castes.

◆ Bhumij tribes and social interaction

During the study of the Bhumij tribes in West Bengal and Bihar, Sinha observed how tribes integrated into the regional Hindu caste system. He identified two levels of the socio-cultural system based on environmental characteristics, economy, social structure, and ideology: the tribal level and the Hindu peasantry level. The peasant level featured emerging traits such as a surplus of an established agricultural economy, social stratification, ethical religion, and a Puritan value system, which contrasted with the egalitarian and non-puritan tribal level. Sinha viewed tribes as a system of social relations and a cultural tradition characterised by isolation and lack of stratification. The upper caste Hindus had limited social interaction with tribes and viewed them as having a basic "refined" and "savage" way of life.



2.1.1.1 Theoretical and Methodological Understanding of Sinha

Sinha built upon the ideas of Redfield's "human-urban continuum" and "rural society and culture" to identify the properties of the tribal-caste and tribal-peasant poles. He focused on Central India and redefined these poles to fit the region. Sinha's work mainly deals with the concepts of tribe, caste, and peasant.

i) Tribal Society

- ◆ Tribes in central India

Sinha believed that tribal society is cut off from other ethnic groups in terms of their living environment, population, economy, politics, and other social relations. This separation creates and reinforces a strong sense of belonging to their own group. Within the group, there is a lack of social hierarchy and specialisation of roles beyond age, gender, and kinship. Ideally, the group is seen as a unified and homogeneous entity with little interaction with the broader traditions of Indian civilisation. This includes a different value system that emphasises equality, a close relationship between humans, nature, and the supernatural world, as well as less structured ideas and culture. They also lack the refined layer of culture, ethical religion, and puritan asceticism found in the broader Indian society.

ii) Caste Groups

- ◆ Hierarchical and homogeneous

In contrast to the isolated and homogeneous tribal society, caste society is typically interconnected, heterogeneous, and stratified. The caste system is characterised by multi-ethnic communities, land ownership, and interactions with other ethnic groups. At the cultural level, caste society is distinguished by its interaction with other subcultures, including communication with the great traditions of Indian civilisation. Caste society has a hierarchical view of social relations, supported by the concept of ritual pollution. Additionally, caste society has a more structured and systematic cultural ideal, which includes the development of an ethical religion and a Puritan perspective on life.

iii) Peasant Village

- ◆ Territorial and regional

A peasant village is a type of territorial community that comprises of multiple caste groups, displaying many features of an ideal caste system. In contrast to the isolated tribal society, the peasant village community has extensive regional connections with various centers of civilisation,

linked by a complex web of relationships. The cultural system of the peasant village is varied and encompasses internal caste and class divisions, as well as intricate external relations with other communities centered around various specialists.

2.1.1.2 Tribe-Caste and Tribal-Peasant Continuum

◆ Inclusion of tribal group

Sinha observed that tribal villages are usually made up of people from the same ethnic group and have limited interaction with other villages outside their cultural area. In contrast, peasant villages have more diverse ethnic groups and connections with various centers of civilisation through relationships. Tribal villages may have some interaction with nearby peasant villages, creating a tribal-peasant continuity. Sinha's idea of the tribal-caste and tribal-peasant continuum is focused on how tribes become a part of the traditional Indian society. He uses examples from various tribal groups to develop his concepts further. We would like to discuss two case studies in particular. They are :

- i. The Hill Maria Gonds
- ii. The Bhumij of Barabhum

i) The Hill Maria Gonds

◆ Social life of Gonds

The Hill Maria Gonds are a tribal group in the Bastar region of Central India. They live in an area of about 15,000 square kilometres that is covered in hills and jungle. The terrain is very difficult to traverse, so communication is mainly done by travelling through the countryside. Even though plow farming has been introduced to the Maria community, they still value and appreciate the traditional method of slash-and-burn farming. They work together as a village to harvest crops and support one another, especially during difficult times of the year. The village is the most important unit for agriculture and people mostly rely on themselves for their basic needs, but they do acquire important goods like clothing, tools, and pottery from outside sources through a weekly market.

The Marias have a segmental social structure based on patrilineal classes and clans that are considered equal. The tribe is an extension of family ties, but inbreeding is limited to the Hill Maria group. Inland villages are mostly single-class communities, and the interior villages where the Marias live are almost exclusively under extensive cultivation and



◆ Single class community

single-ethnic and single-class communities. There is no information about land ownership, and Gaita, a religious or secular elder of the village, is the only primus interpres among the village leaders. Although the Marias are not stratified, they are aware of other ethnic groups living in the area and place them in some kind of unified order based on caste order, wearing the sacred thread, and receiving food in ministry. Castes are not considered “high” or “low,” but “big” or “small.”

◆ Identity of Maria Gonds

Most Hindus are placed in the “main caste” category except those with “degrading” occupations. The Hill Maria people view Muslims and Christians as ritually inferior, adopting a Hindu attitude. The Hill Maria have their own strong beliefs and practices, which lack the spiritual traditions of Hinduism and have little Sanskrit influence. The Hill Maria, like many isolated tribes, have a strong sense of identity, distinguishing themselves from both their own members and outsiders. Additionally, the Hill Maria people have a lively and non-ascetic approach to enjoying life.

ii) The Bhumij of Barabhum

◆ Stratified caste system

The Hill Maria tribe is known for its strong sense of isolation and loyalty to their clan and village. In contrast, the Bhumij people have a more stratified society with a strong value system that sets them apart from the Hindu caste. According to Risley, who studied them in the 1880s, the Bhumij people had lost their original language and now spoke only Bengali. They worship Hindu Gods alongside their own, and the more advanced among them employed Brahmins as family priests. They also have totemistic exogamous subdivisions similar to the Mundas and Santhal sections, but they are starting to forget the totems’ significance and abandon the names due to fear of ritual pollution. The Hill Maria tribe has a well-developed concept of ritual pollution and a simplified caste hierarchy, but no caste group as important as the Brahmin, barber, or washerman has access to rituals. The caste ranking in this area is based on what Marriott called “attributive factors” rather than “interactive” factors.

The interactions of the Maria people are mostly limited to their own ethnic group in terms of family, marriage, and rituals. However, their religion shares many similarities with Hinduism, such as worshipping ancestral spirits, mother goddesses, and powerful male Gods. They also have a vague belief in a supreme being and practice feasts, dancing, and animal sacrifices. The use of certain ritual objects like red

♦ Ethnic group practices

powder, grain, iron, peacock feathers, and chains is also common among them. They believe in reincarnation and karma, though the latter is not well understood. The tribe has become a caste in the full sense of the word and has been stripped of all traces of its true origin, according to Risley's observations in 1889 and 1915. When Sinha studied the Bhumij people in the 1950s, he found that they had moved even further towards Hinduism since Risley's time.

♦ Geographical features of Barabhum

Compared to the Bastar region, Barabhum is a more developed area. The northern part of Barabhum, which is the main area of the region, is relatively flat and has undergone extensive deforestation. Bhumij, who are considered the earliest inhabitants of the region, live in a more densely populated and ethnically diverse area than the Hill Maria. Bhumij, along with their neighboring Santhals and Mahato, are settled farmers who cultivate rice using ploughs. While agriculture is mainly for subsistence, they also grow cash crops such as oilseeds and tobacco. The main source of cash income, however, is the increasing scarcity of resin from privately owned trees. Unlike the Maria, the Bhumij place a great deal of importance on private land ownership.

♦ Power of village head

The class has no communal property apart from the ossuary site, and the descent group only exerts pressure to sell or transfer ancestral land to outsiders. The village headman has a right to an acre of land as a service, and also collects rent from village tenants. The residents of the area include landowners, landless laborers, poor farmers, large-scale farmers, and village elders. In this town, which is home to seven ethnic groups, the Bhumij own more than four-fifths of the land. Although the Bhumij have control over most of the traditional feudal regimes and many villages, land ownership is not evenly distributed across the region. The king of Barabhum granted nine villages as rent-paying religious territory to the Brahmins, and in these villages, the Bhumij are secondary landowners. In some villages of the Pargana, they have a subordinate relationship with other castes like Mahato, Kayastha, and Baniya. While there are no weekly markets in the 1,500 km² area of Abujhmar hill, which is the typical habitat of the Maria, there are 12 weekly markets within the 635 km² area of Barabhum, with another weekly market located 3-5 miles away. The number of ethnic groups participating in the market can exceed 30.

Similar to the Marias, the Bhumij people are divided into various patrilineal endogamous clans or gotras associated



◆ Categorisation into class or gotras

with their respective ancestral villages where the ossuaries of the clan reside. However, these clans do not have any corporate organisation or clear territory. Rather, they are segmented into functional paternal lines with corresponding status for other segments, which gives a sense of equality within Bhumij families despite differences in wealth and land ownership.

◆ Socio-rituals in marriage

Apart from variations in land ownership and position in the land revenue hierarchy, the Bhumij are further divided into several socio-ritual marriage classes that partially correspond to the land revenue hierarchy. The Nichu and Patit classes are considered the lowest rung, while the majority belong to the Nagadi class, who have access to “degraded” Brahmin ritual service but abstain from non-vegetarian food and alcohol. The Ataishey classes also use “degraded” Brahmins but refrain from consuming chicken and liquor. Wealthier Bhumij people prefer to be recognised as Rajput Kshatriya, and it is believed that the royal Kshatriya lineage of Barabhum also has Bhumij origins. Due to their demographic situation and dominant position in the administration of land revenue and ownership, the Bhumij people are easily accessible to several ethnic groups and often have advantages in intergenerational relations. Therefore, it is not surprising that while the Hill Maria participate somewhat distantly in the stratified ranking, the Bhumij participate more strongly in it.

◆ Interactions with regional castes

The Bhumij people have a strong connection to the regional caste system and interact with many different castes, including the Brahmins, Vaishnavas, barbers, washermen, and even low-caste groups like Sahis, Doods, and Ghas. They have relationships with many different castes, including ceremonial friendships, festival participation, sharing, and market relations. They aspire to be recognised as Rajput Kshatriya and are actively involved in social mobility movements, with guidance from the Ataishey upper class. The Bhumij take pride in their ancestors who cleared the forest to cultivate the land, and they hold most of the ethnic groups in the Paragana, except for the Kharias and the Pahirs, as outsiders. Starting from their own groups, the Bhumij divide the various ethnic groups of the region at different points of socio-cultural distance, starting from the closest to them, approximately as follows:

1. Kharia, Pahira and Santhal, Hindu artisan castes, barber, washer man.

2. Mahato.
3. Brahmin, Vaishnava.
4. Rajput-Kshatriya.
5. 'Bengali' castes: Baniya, Kayastha, Tamil etc.
6. Bihari castes, with whom the Bhumij do not share a common language (Sinha, 1957).

◆ Hierarchical power and wealth

The Bhumij people worship traditional Gods and Goddesses, but Hindu Gods such as Shiva, Durga, and Kali are considered more prestigious. Some Bhumij people contemplate Hindu concepts and are educated in sacred texts. The Bhumij share a love of sensuality with the Maria people, but also want to appear respectable to upper-caste Hindus. They oppose mixed dancing, drinking, and partying. The social structure of the Bhumij includes both segmental and hierarchical principles, and the position of power and wealth is respected. Women's freedom is limited in higher social hierarchies. Compared to the Kharias and Pahrias who live in isolated villages, the Bhumij have a lighter position in the regional caste system, access to ritual specialist castes, and a stronger knowledge of the great tradition. The Kharias and Pahrias have simple notions of regional caste hierarchy, are less puritanical regarding premarital sex, and have weaker knowledge of the great tradition.

a) Difference between Hill Maria and Bhumij Tribes

◆ Cultural heterogeneity and complex patterns

Sinha makes a distinction between the Hill Maria and Bhumij tribes, as shown in the table below. He argues that this represents a significant shift away from the traditional "tribal" way of life towards the extremes of "peasant" and "caste" societies. This shift is driven by several factors, including a decrease in ecological isolation and an increase in ethnic heterogeneity, social stratification, and the emergence of an elite indigenous class. These changes are happening simultaneously and systematically, with centres of civilisation emerging abruptly. Cultural changes are also taking place, with greater regional cultural heterogeneity in terms of ethnic diversity, social stratification, and role specialisation. Religion is also changing, with a greater emphasis on the Hindu tradition and puritan values. The extent of ethnic heterogeneity and the complexity of patterns of interaction between and within religious and ethnic groups determine the final contours of the two poles. In the



case of the Bhumij, population density, ethnic heterogeneity, and social hierarchy are maintained through well-established ploughing, regional craft, and market organisation, as well as the controlling role of the chief in the hierarchical land revenue administration of the Pargana. However, technological development, population growth, and other factors cannot necessarily create a caste system in a tribal area.

	Tribe (Hill Maria Gond, Madhya Pradesh)	Caste Peasant Bhumij (West Bengal and Bihar)
◆ Ecosystem	Hill and forest	2/3 plain;1/3 forest
◆ Ethnic Complexity	Uni-ethnic villages Uni-ethnic tribal tract	Average village contains six ethnic groups The Bhumij form 15% of the population of Pargana Barabhum containing 64 ethnic groups
◆ Technology and Economy	Swidden No market with the tribal tract Community ownership of swidden land	Wet rice cultivation Market at regular intervals of 3-5 miles A hierarchic land revenue organisation involving at least four levels of sub-indentation
◆ Stratification	Internal stratification practically none	Considerable feudalisation of the political structure and corresponding recognition of at least three nearly endogamous socio-ritual classes.
◆ Caste-like Interaction	Ranked in three strata Non-tribal ritual specialists employed	20-28 ranks At least four categories of caste employed

Table 2.1.1 The Hill Maria Gond and the Bhumij and their Level of Complexity

The pattern of progress seen in the comparison of two societies at opposite ends of the proposed continuum may mistakenly suggest that assessing the relative position of more closely related societies on the continuum is a straightforward task. However, it's possible that the different criteria used to define the continuum may not progress at the same pace in nearby regions. For instance, one group may be advanced in

terms of market activities but lagging behind in adopting the great traditional Gods and ethical orientations of religion.

2.1.1.3 Tribal Movements

◆ Socio political background

In the 18th and 19th centuries, during the early days of British rule, several ethnic rebellions occurred among the tribal communities, such as the Sardar Larai (1885) and Birsa Movement (1895-1900) among the Munda, Ganganarain Hangama (1832) among the Bhumij, Kol Rebellion (1832), Santhal Rebellion (1857-58), Rebellion of the Kacha Nagas (the 1880s) etc. Sinha's focus is not on all inter-tribal social movements, but on socio-political movements aimed at strengthening the political solidarity of a tribe or tribal group in relation to non-tribal groups. He sees ecological and cultural isolation, economic backwardness, and disillusionment with developed groups as the main roots of tribal solidarity movements. The political implications of this analysis suggest that there should be provisions for greater economic opportunity and a better understanding of the nascent core of Indian national culture.

◆ Social existence of tribal community

Sinha argues that the "cultural autonomy" of these groups should not be interfered with, but arrangements should be made to learn about the "emerging core" of Indian national culture, so that the elite, as well as the masses, are oriented towards the core pattern rather than searching for a runaway pattern in search of a new identity. Instead of taking an alarmist attitude towards tribal solidarity movements, "genuine" solidarity movements should be welcomed, and "misguided" movements opposed. Sinha traces both the process by which socio-political and cultural experiences gradually expand beyond primitive tribal units and the process by which the boundaries of solidarity are redrawn around an expanded horizon towards the Indian core. He recommends certain policy guidelines for relatively unintegrated tribes to be fully integrated into the national community of India and the mainstream of the nascent national culture. Economic opportunities should permeate the broad base of the general population and not be limited to an elite group. By identifying "real" tribal movements and countering them with "real" nationalism, we will succeed in our task of building a new nation by uniting relatively isolated tribes.

2.1.1.4 Critical Views on Sinha's Approach

Sinha sees the exclusive insistence on "lost" primitives as having some serious limitations in the overall perspective of Indian civilisation:



◆ Limitations of Indian civilisation



1. First, primitive tribes cover a very limited (albeit significant) dimension of the overall complexity of Indian society and culture.
2. Even the primitives, except perhaps the fringes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, cannot be properly studied except as historically dependent classes of Indian civilisation.
3. It is generally assumed that tribes change faster than castes. Except for a few extreme cases like the Great Andaman, the above assumption is not based on a systematic examination of the facts.
4. In the case of Indian residents, the interruption of service obligations shall not be prolonged. Our general impression is that the social structures and cultural patterns of marginal tribes are not changing so rapidly as to prompt them to embark on a large-scale program of collapsing rescue anthropology in the ad hoc search for disappearing practices. A systematic study of the entire society and culture of India.

2.1.2 N.K. Bose



Nirmal Kumar Bose (1901-1972) was a highly accomplished Indian anthropologist and sociologist who made significant contributions to his field. He was born on January 22, 1901 in Calcutta, Bengal and passed away on October 15, 1972. Bose received his education from various schools across Bihar, Bengal, and Orissa, completing his Matriculation, Intermediate (Science), BA in Geology and MA in Anthropology in 1917, 1919, 1921, and 1924 respectively. He first studied Geology and then Anthropology at the University of Calcutta, earning his M.Sc. from there in 1923-24.

Bose had a diverse career, teaching in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Calcutta and serving as Reader in Human Geography in the Department of Geography, University of Calcutta in 1959. He was also a Visiting Professor at the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Chicago, and was invited to lecture at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Michigan. Bose served as Director of the Anthropological Survey of India from 1959 to 1964, and from 1967 to 1970, he held the senior position of Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



Bose was committed to both the pursuit of science and the service of humanity. His involvement in the Indian independence movement led to his imprisonment, but he continued to make significant contributions to his field. In recognition of his work, Bose was awarded the Annandale Gold Medal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1948 and was elected President of the Anthropology and Archaeology Section of the Indian Science Congress in 1949. He was also awarded the Padma Shri in 1966 for his dedication to social work and service to humanity. Bose left behind a lasting legacy and his standards of work continue to inspire future generations of anthropologists and sociologists.

Major Writings of Bose

1. Canons of Orissan Architecture (1932)
2. Excavations in Mayurbhanj (1948)
3. Hindu Samajer Garan (1949, in Bengali) English translation by A. Beteille in (1976)
4. Studies in Gandhism (1959)
5. Cultural Anthropology (1961)
6. Peasant Life in India: A Study in Indian Unity and Diversity (1961)
7. Culture and Society in India (1967)
8. Problems of National Integration (1967)
9. The Structure of Hindu Society (1975)

2.1.2.1 Methodology

Bose's primary interest was in the civilisation and culture of India. His approach was inductive and historical. He created a classification system based on Indian textual categories to analyse the distribution of cultural traits. He was also influenced by Malinowski's functional approach, as evidenced in his work "Nature of Culture," which emphasises the adaptive function of culture. Bose aimed to provide a unified framework that combined the approaches of ethnographers, Indologists, and social historians. He believed that to understand Hindu civilisation, an anthropologist must go beyond the applied aspects of the culture. Bose emphasised the importance of integrating Ethnology and Indology in the study of Indian society. The use of these approaches allows for the reconstruction of the structure of Indian civilisation, and the study of social history is critical to our understanding of it.

◆ Inductive and historical approach



2.1.2.2 Contributions of Bose

- ◆ Bose's threefold analysis of Indian society

Bose's book, *The Structure of Hindu Society*, provides a comprehensive and scholarly understanding of Indian society. He divides his analysis into three parts. The first part focuses on ethnography, drawing from his extensive fieldwork, especially among tribal communities. The second part is predominantly Indological, where he discusses the theoretical and practical aspects of Hindu social life. Finally, the third part examines the social history of India. Through this tripartite approach, Bose presents a multifaceted understanding of Indian society.

i. Ethnography

- ◆ Juangs and the influence of hinduism

Bose's research draws upon ethnographic data to illustrate the characteristics of tribal communities in Orissa and Chota Nagpur, as well as their relationship with the larger society. According to Bose, Indian tribal communities cannot be considered uniform and do not share the same relationship with mainstream society. Bose identifies specific stages that simpler communities typically pass through, and classifies Indian tribal communities based on their technological development and degree of isolation. He conducted fieldwork among the Juangs and often cites this community as an example of a group that has had limited contact with what he calls Brahminical civilisation. Bose also ponders whether the Juangs should be regarded as Hindus or not, given their status as a non-Aryan community within Hinduism. Although the Juangs have their own language and perform their own marriage and funeral rites, there are indications that Hindu religious ideas have influenced their culture. Nonetheless, it is important to distinguish between Hindu society and marginal communities like the Juangs, which have a complex caste-based division of labor. Bose also discusses the two major tribes of Chhota Nagpur, the Munda and Oraons, who represent a higher level of technical development and are larger than the Juangs.

During the 19th century, there were several social movements that occurred among the Mundas and Oraons. The Oraons desired to break free from Hindu rule and return to an idealized past that was largely constructed from elements of Sanskrit Hinduism. Both the Oraons and Mundas lived lives that were heavily influenced by Hinduism. Interestingly, Hindu castes such as Ahir, Lohar, and Midha also participated in tribal celebrations and, without prior knowledge of who is who, it was impossible

◆ Tribes and Brahmanism

to distinguish them from the tribal people. While Hindus did not grant the castes economic freedom, they did attempt to preserve the original social and religious culture of the tribes as much as possible. It was not the Hindus' policy to eliminate beliefs and practices that were incompatible with Brahminical moral concepts. However, something had to be done to reconcile tribal cultures with Brahmanism. Bose investigated the coexistence and interpenetration of two forms of social organisation in the field - brahmanical and tribal - which demonstrated his skill as a field researcher. As an anthropologist, Bose was not only interested in discovering a specific cultural model, but also in uncovering the theory behind it. He did not believe that the theory alone could explain the workings of Hindu society in its entirety, but it was still valuable in comprehending how society truly functioned.

ii. Indology

◆ Analysis of epics and Smritis

Bose's theories on the organisation of Hindu society are backed by evidence from different sources in the field of Indology, including epics, Smritis, and Buddhist texts. He uses a story from the Ramayana to demonstrate how lower caste individuals attempted to adopt twice-born practices. By analysing the epic and Smritis, Bose identifies the structure of the Varna system and highlights the constant efforts to define particular communities according to their origin and function. Bose also examines the roles and responsibilities of the king as described in various texts.

◆ Self sufficiency of village life

Bose's research also includes an examination of the division of labor in village life. He notes that the division was highly precise and that the village was primarily a self-sufficient entity, producing most of its own consumption. However, Bose recognises that the village's self-sufficiency was relative and not absolute, as they still required goods from weekly markets, fairs, and pilgrimage centers. Bose also briefly touches upon city life, primarily through the works of Vatsyayna. He notes that Muslim rule introduced some new crafts into society, but these innovations remained mostly limited to urban areas and did not alter the fundamental structure of village economic organisation.

◆ Principles of Buddhist and Bhakthi movement

Bose investigates the efforts made to challenge the fundamental principles of the Hindu social structure, including the ancient Buddhist movement and the Bhakti movement of Chaitanya during the Middle Ages. These movements rejected the caste hierarchy and the division



of status by birth. They brought a new spirit to religion, but they were not successful in inducing significant changes in the prevailing social order or in the production system.

iii. Social History

- ♦ Scientific analysis to understand the present

Bose believed that a scientific approach to studying the past is necessary to learn from history and apply those lessons to the present and future. He provided historical examples to explain how British rule had an impact on the structure of Hindu society. Bose traced the lineage of the Sinhas of Raipur and revealed how they used their connections with the British East India Company to become successful merchants, landowners, factory owners, and professionals within a few generations. This shift from one occupation to another was a departure from traditional economic organisation and became possible due to the emergence of new economic forces. These forces gradually eroded the caste-based division of labour, as Bose demonstrated using census data. Although the link between caste and occupation began to weaken, the rate of change varied across different castes.

2.1.2.3 Structure of Indian Society

- ♦ Gandhian thought and reduction of social diversity

According to Bose, the structure of Hindu society was founded on certain ideas, with economic factors playing a crucial role in its stability and evolution. Agricultural technology was also significant, with the caste Hindus sharing this knowledge with the tribal peoples. Gandhi's freedom movement helped to bring these two groups closer together, reducing social diversity in the process. Bose recognised the importance of financial factors and was particularly interested in the economic organisation of tribal peoples. Rather than using language, religion, or race to classify different tribal groups in India, he believed that subsistence was the best means of categorisation, allowing us to better understand the relationship between "tribes" and "non-tribes" in Hindu civilisation. Bose observed that tribal people were under pressure to integrate into mainstream society due to economic factors. He also noted that while Islamic influence did not fundamentally alter the structure of Hindu society, British influence did, thanks to the introduction of new technology and a different production system. Besides the above, Bose also wrote on the following topics in *The Structure of Hindu Society*:

- i. Study of Architecture
- ii. Indian Civilisation

iii. Caste System

iv. Tribal Studies

i. Study of Architecture

◆ Artistic creation and Civilisation

During his stay in Puri, Orissa, Bose encountered Ram Maharana, a renowned shilpi or temple architect, who introduced him to the traditional principles of Orissan architecture, known as Shilpa-Shastri. Bose even edited the Oriya manuscript of the Shilpa-Shastra, which was subsequently published in 1932. He believed that to truly understand a civilisation, one must combine knowledge from multiple sources, including both written texts and artistic creations. Bose was particularly captivated by the beauty of the ancient temples in Orissa and even began giving lectures to visitors in Puri about these magnificent structures.

ii. Indian Civilisation

◆ Cultural pluralism and self reliance

Bose presented his views on Indian civilisation in his 1971 Jagdish Bose Memorial Lecture. He argued that Indian civilisation was fundamentally different from European civilisation, which was based on a history of frequent wars that gave rise to nationalism. In contrast, Indian civilisation developed a model of cultural pluralism under relatively peaceful conditions. While encouraging diversity in culture, its economic organisation aimed to weave all communities into a web of interdependence while preserving their distinct identity. Bose believed that the true creative potential of Indian civilisation could only be appreciated by studying its stage of expansion and self-reliance, rather than limiting observations to the post-medieval period and its recent decline.

◆ Konark temples and self confidence

Bose wrote a Bengali article titled "*Temples of Konark*" in which he vividly describes the phase of Indian civilisation characterised by expansion and self-confidence. The Konark temples were constructed during a prosperous period of Orissan history when King Narsingdev of the Ganga dynasty had just triumphed over the Gaura Sultan with his mighty army. The country was flourishing and the people were enthusiastic about enjoying life and safeguarding their independence. Architects were raised in that atmosphere and strove to develop confidence and self-sufficiency in their work, resulting in sculptures that are filled with light and free from false shame. Even though partially buried under crushed stone blocks, the temples of Konark still stand today as a testament to the self-confident past.



iii. Caste System

- ◆ Caste system and new social meanings

Bose's fascination with the caste system in India began during his work with untouchables in the slums of Bolpur town under the Gandhian Reconstruction Programme. He rejected the notion of divine origin, reincarnation, and the concept of purity and pollution. In a series of articles such as '*Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption*' (1941), '*Caste in India*' (1951), and '*Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal*' (1958), Bose proposes that the persistence of the caste system is rooted in the economic and cultural security provided by non-competitive, hereditary, vocation-based productive organisation in isolated village communities guided by the general norm of inter-ethnic cultural tolerance. Bose viewed recent developments as deviations from the traditional non-competitive system towards a competitive one, where the old structure is used in various combinations with new social meanings. Along with his interest in change-oriented studies of the Indian caste system, Bose developed an interest in studying castes as self-regulating corporate groups that guide the social life of their members. He initiated several studies on the operation of caste associations in different regions of India, focusing on the roles of kings, temples, mathas, and other entities in regulating caste norms.

iv. Tribal Studies

- ◆ Tribal economy and Hindu Caste System

Bose had intended to embark on an in-depth empirical study of the Juangs of Orissa at the outset of his career. However, he was forced to depart Keonjhar after a brief stint in the field in 1928. The knowledge he acquired during this brief time with the Juangs resulted in the publication of three short papers (Bose, 1928, 1929, 1930). This field study offered him a fundamental understanding of how tribes, who followed relatively primitive technology like swidden cultivation, were assimilated into an agriculture and craft-based Hindu society. In his numerous insightful papers on tribals, he aimed to highlight the tribal economy, the absorption of tribes into the Hindu caste system, and the causes of the tribal separatist movement. In his book, "*Tribal Life in India*" (1970), Bose remarked that, except for a small percentage, there was little difference in the economic lifestyle of tribals and that of peasant and artisan communities. The contrast between our rural populace and urban classes is undoubtedly more significant than that between peasants and tribal communities in terms of their occupations.

Summarised Overview

Surajit Sinha (1965) challenges Bailey's model's universal applicability. Sinha's research on the Bhumij of Manbhum and the Maria Gonds of Bastar emphasises the coexistence of distinct levels of social structure and culture in the tribal-caste and tribal-peasant continuum. Sinha stresses the fundamental similarities between tribes and lower castes, including social equality within one's ethnic group, greater freedom for women, a closer relationship between nature and humans, a low puritanical ascetic value system, a religious pantheon of local deities, and equality within one's national group. Sinha's concept of the Rajput function of the central God of India systematically expresses his ideas about the continuity of tribes and castes. He argues that the spread of the Rajput model of state could only occur among those tribes that had achieved an established level of agricultural technology, and that the history of state formation in the tribal zone of central India is largely a story of border tribes. Sinha asserts that the process of transforming a tribe into a caste was followed by the creation of layers in an egalitarian society. Social classes emerged based on subordination to territorial units, and there was a close link between power, economy, and social status. The second step was to establish kinship through marriage alliances using Rajput and ritual symbols. Myths preserved the link between Rajput and pseudo-Rajput traditions, and the tribal belt of India was linked to the mainstream of Hindu civilisation, forming a powerful tribal-caste community.

The civilisational perspective pertains to a society's perception of its own civilisation. It posits that a society can be deemed "civilised" when it has reached a relative state of freedom from the struggle for survival, allowing it to develop a complex culture and structure. This perspective draws a distinction between civilisation and hunter-gatherer or horticultural societies, which are often regarded as "primitive" by civilised individuals. The process of civilisation describes the changes in the societal structure and culture over time. The civilisational perspective highlights the intricate nature of both large and small traditions, encompassing the study of tribal, rural, and urban cultures. It also views civilisation as an organisation of experts functioning in harmony with national society. The study of a combination of topics, such as the analysis of classical and medieval texts, administrative records, the village, caste and its wider network, and the question of unity and diversity, is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the structural foundations of any civilisation.

N. K. Bose's examination of the properties of material and their distribution in different parts of India is a vital perspective for analysing the unity of Indian culture. He delves into how tribes have merged into castes, highlighting how a common material culture helps connect the different regions of India. Bose's analysis also underscores the linkages between Indians based on their customs, beliefs, and other characteristics. While Bose was a student of Indian civilisation, he did not try to intentionally disentangle civilisation from culture, but rather



viewed them as intertwined. Bose's contributions are incredibly valuable, although it's important to remember that he was primarily an anthropologist and ethnologist, and also a linguistic anthropologist.

Anthropology is a comprehensive social science that places great emphasis on ethnological fieldwork. Bose was well-versed in these principles of anthropology, but despite his close association with Gandhi, he failed to acknowledge the diversity and pluralism of Indian society. His interest was primarily focused on the assimilation of tribal communities into Hindu society, and he displayed great empathy towards them. However, this led him to become a sectarian anthropologist, championing Hindutva ideology. Bose's theories were flawed, as were those of other empirical anthropologists. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that he tried to rise to the challenges of his time. Bose utilised traditional textual categories such as Satva, Raja, and Tamas, and Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha to categorise cultures. However, his study of Indian civilisation was overly critical, and he oversimplified the textual concepts without fully considering the historical and social context.

Assignments

1. Discuss Surajit Sinha's approach to studying the continuity of tribes and castes in India. How does he emphasise the similarity between tribes and lower castes, and what factors does he identify as contributing to the transformation of tribes into castes?
2. How does Surajit Sinha challenge Bailey's model of tribal-caste continuum in his work on the Bhumij of Manbhum and the Maria Gonds of Bastar? Discuss the distinct levels of social structure and culture that Sinha emphasises, and how they contribute to his understanding of the continuity of tribes and castes.
3. What role does the Rajput model of state play in Surajit Sinha's concept of the Rajput function of the central God of India? How does he argue that the spread of this model could only happen among tribes that had reached an established level of agricultural technology, and what factors contribute to the transformation of tribes into castes?
4. Discuss the importance of traditional centres of Sanskrit learning and educational institutions in evaluating social norms in Indian civilisation, according to Surajit Sinha. How have these institutions been affected by competition with new forms and emerging cultural demands in society?

5. How does Surajit Sinha emphasise the importance of studying urban communities in understanding the traditional urban basis of Indian civilisation?
6. What functional categories of cities does he suggest studying, and how might studying these cities contribute to our understanding of Indian civilisation?
7. What is N.K. Bose's civilisational view, and how does it differ from traditional anthropological perspectives?
8. Discuss Bose's analysis of the fusion of tribes into castes and its role in shaping Indian culture.
9. Evaluate Bose's theory of the absorption of tribes into Hindu society. How does this perspective reflect Bose's political and ideological beliefs?
10. How does Bose's civilisational view contribute to our understanding of Indian civilisation? Discuss his use of traditional textual categories such as Satva, Raja, and Tamas, and Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha to classify cultures.
11. Critically analyse the strengths and weaknesses of Bose's civilisational perspective. In what ways does it provide unique insights into Indian society and culture, and what are its limitations?

Suggested Readings

1. Bose, N. K. (1985). *Indian Civilisation and Culture*. Mumbai : Popular Prakashan.
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2. Srinivas, M. N. (1966). *Social Change in Modern India*. California : University of California Press.
3. Dumont, L. (1970). *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. USA : University of Chicago Press.
4. Gupta, D. (2000). *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present*. Netherlands : Brill.
5. Bose, N. K. (1961). *The Structure of Hindu Society*. Mumbai : Asia Publishing House.
6. Bose, N. K. (1970). *Tribal Life in India: A Study in Orissa*. New Delhi : National Publishing House.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Dialectical Approach

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ explain the methodological understanding of DP Mukerjee to analyse Indian society
- ♦ outline the contributions of A R Desai to explain Indian social structure
- ♦ understand the significance of Marxian approach to interpret the social transformation of Indian society

Background

In the field of sociology, the dialectical approach is an important tool for understanding the complex and interconnected nature of social reality. This approach emphasises the dynamic and ever-changing nature of social structures, and the ways in which different forces and ideas interact to shape society. At its core, the dialectical approach is based on the idea that social reality is constantly in flux. It involves examining the ways in which different social forces interact and shape each other, and looking for ways to synthesise these opposing forces into a more comprehensive understanding of society.

D.P. Mukherjee was a notable scholar who utilised the dialectical approach in his sociological analyses. The dialectical approach is a method of examining social phenomena by viewing them as the result of opposing forces, contradictions, and conflicts. D.P. Mukherjee applied this approach to his study of Indian society and emphasised the importance of understanding the historical, economic, and cultural factors that shape social relations. He viewed society as a complex and dynamic system that is constantly evolving and changing. DP's work on dialectical materialism emphasised the importance of class struggle in shaping social structures, and he argued that it was essential to understand the dialectical relationship between the individual and society. His contributions to the field of sociology have had a lasting impact on the study of social phenomena using the dialectical approach.



To understand Desai's work, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of sociology and social movements. By studying Desai's work on social unrest and nationalism, learners can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between different social forces and the ways in which they can shape the social world around us. This knowledge can be useful for anyone interested in working towards a more just and equitable society.

Ultimately, the dialectical approach is a powerful tool for understanding the complex and dynamic nature of social reality. It can help us to see the world in a new and more nuanced light, and to appreciate the ways in which different social forces interact to shape society. By using this approach, we can gain a deeper understanding of the social world around us, and work to create a more just and equitable society.

Keywords

Marxism, Colonialism, Individuality, Socialisation, Modernity

Discussion

- ◆ Marxist and non Marxist approach

In the fifties and early sixties; American structural-functionalism and British functionalism dominated social sciences; in general and sociological researches, in particular. However, Desai undeterred by these imperialistic influences continued to write on Indian society and state from the Marxist perspective. He finds that the dominant sociological approaches in India are basically non-Marxist, and the Marxist approach has been rejected on the pretext of it being dogmatic, value-loaded and deterministic in nature.

According to Desai, the Marxist approach is the relevant approach. It could help to study government policies; the classes entrenched into state apparatus and India's political economy. Desai writes, "I wish the social science practitioners in India break-through the atmosphere of allergy towards this profound and influential approach and create climate to study the growing body of literature articulating various aspects of Indian society, the class character of the state and the path of development". In his opinion, the Marxist approach helps one to raise relevant



◆ Property relations and Indian norms

questions, conduct researches in the right direction, formulate adequate hypotheses, evolve proper concepts, adopt and combine appropriate research techniques and locate the central tendencies of transformation with its major implications. Property relations are crucial because they shape the purpose, nature, control, direction and objectives underlying the production. Further, property relations determine the norms about who shall get how much and on what grounds. For understanding the post-independence Indian society, the Marxist approach will focus on the specific type of property relations, which existed on the eve of independence and which are being elaborated by the state as the active agent of transformation.

◆ Lack of empirical data in dialectical approach

In brief, the Marxist approach gives central importance to property structure in analysing any society. It provides “historical location or specification of all social phenomena. Moreover, “this approach recognises the dialectics of evolutionary as well as revolutionary changes of the breaks in historical continuity in the transition from one socio-economic formation to another” In this context, Desai tried to understand the Indian society which also reflects in his works. Desai not only give notice to the mainstream that Marx has a place in sociology, but also, he provided a forum for radical-minded scholars to broaden their horizon of research. However, this approach has been criticised on many counts. According to Yogendra Singh, the important limitation of the dialectical approach for studies of social change in India is the lack of substantial empirical data in support of his major assertion, which are often historiography and can easily be challenged in theoretical terms, however, this approach can be more visible for analysis of the processes of change and conflict in India provided it is founded upon a sound tradition of scientific research. Despite these limitations, some studies conducted on this model offer useful hypotheses, which can be further tested in course of the studies on social change.

2.2.1 D.P. Mukherjee



DP, also known as Dhurjati Prasad Mukherjee, played a pivotal role in establishing sociology in India. He was born on 5 October 1894 in West Bengal, India, to a middle-class Bengali family with a rich tradition of intellectual pursuits. While DP initially aspired to pursue the sciences, like his contemporary Satyen Bose, he eventually opted for economics, history, and political science during his time at Calcutta University, where he obtained a master's degree in those fields. His plans to study abroad were thwarted by the outbreak of World War I.

DP began his career as a lecturer in economics and sociology at Bangabasi College in Calcutta before joining the newly established Lucknow University in 1922, where he stayed for 32 years as a professor of sociology and economics. He was invited to serve as a visiting professor of sociology at the International Institute of Social Sciences in The Hague in 1953, and upon retiring from Lucknow University in 1954, he accepted the Chair of Economics at Aligarh University for the last five years of his active academic life. DP was a multifaceted personality who made significant contributions to various fields, including economics, literature, music, and art, but his impact on sociology was particularly significant. He served as the first president of the Indian Sociological Conference and vice-president of the International Sociological Association. DP was a Marxist, and his analysis of Indian society was based on the Marxist perspective of dialectical materialism.

2.2.1.1 Methodology

D.P. Mukherjee was a renowned figure in Indian sociology, known for his resistance towards compartmentalisation of knowledge within social science. While he started his journey in sociology as a social philosopher, he became an advocate of empiricism and spiritual feelings. His focus was on understanding the Indian social reality that was deeply rooted in tradition and finding ways to adapt modernity to it for the betterment of the common people. Despite being acknowledged as a Marxist, he did not consider himself a dogmatic Marxist, but rather followed Marxism as a method of analysis rather than a political ideology. Through his dialectical analysis of Indian history, he explored the complex interactions between tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, and individualism and collectivism in contemporary India.

- ◆ Tradition of Modernity

D.P. Mukherjee played a significant role in introducing Marxian sociology to India. He had an open-minded approach towards western ideas, concepts, and analytical categories.



◆ Marxian Sociology

While he believed in the need for indigenous sociology and social anthropology, he did not believe in isolating these disciplines in India from the western social traditions. Instead of being referred to as a Marxist, he preferred the term 'Marxologist' and aimed to interpret the encounter between Indian tradition and modernity dialectically. During the colonial era, this encounter unleashed many forces of cultural contradictions. D.P. Mukherjee focused more on India's historical specificity of cultural and social transformation, which was characterised less by 'class struggle' and more by value assimilation and cultural synthesis resulting from the encounter between tradition and modernity. This approach is reflected in the works of scholars such as Madan.

◆ Legacy as an inspiring teacher

Radhakamal Mukerjee and D.P. Mukherjee, contemporaries in Lucknow, differed significantly in their contributions to sociology and social anthropology in India. Although they shared a broad perspective, their intellectual approaches were distinct. Unlike Radhakamal and D.N. Majumdar, D.P. Mukherjee did not engage in empirical exercises such as data collection or surveys. This was not because he did not value empiricism, but because he preferred to be an armchair social critic, philosopher, and culturologist. His academic interests were diverse, ranging from music and fine arts to the Indian tradition in relation to modernity. While he was not as prolific a writer as his contemporaries, he left a powerful legacy as an intellectual and an inspiring teacher that influenced later generations of Indian sociologists.

It's worth noting that like Radhakamal, D.P. Mukherjee also believed in breaking down rigid barriers between social science disciplines and shared a historical perspective in his studies. However, unlike Ghurye, they did not create a new conceptual framework in their works, despite their interest in studying the structure and change in Indian society.

2.2.1.2 Major Works

◆ Intellectual works

D.P. Mukherjee was a versatile scholar who authored nineteen books in total, with ten written in Bengali and nine in English. His early works included *Personality and the Social Sciences* (1924) and *Basic Concepts in Sociology* (1932). Other notable publications included *Modern Indian Culture* (1942, revised and enlarged edition in 1948), *Problems of Indian Youth* (1942), and *Views and Counterviews* (1946). Among his works, *Modern Indian Culture and Diversities* (1958) are widely regarded as his best. In addition to his contributions

to sociology, he also wrote on a range of other topics, such as *Tagore: A Study* (1943), *On Indian History: A Study in Method* (1943), and *Introduction to Music* (1945), showcasing his versatility as a scholar. Furthermore, he also held a unique place in Bengali literature as a novelist, essayist, and literary critic.

2.2.1.3 Contributions of DP

Here, we would like to highlight DP's contribution to the following:

1. Personality
2. Modern Indian Culture
3. Traditions
4. Nature and Method of Sociology
5. Role of New Middle Classes
6. Making of Indian History
7. Modernisation
8. Music

1. Personality

DP humorously shared that he once proposed the concept of 'purusha'. According to him, 'purusha' is not an isolated individual or subject to group thinking, but an active agent who establishes relationships with others and fulfils responsibilities. He argued that 'purusha' grows through these relationships and earns a better place in human groups. DP acknowledged that Indian social life is somewhat regimented, similar to the lives of bees and beavers, but most Indians do not feel regimented. In contrast, he doubted whether Western individuals dominated by the market system truly have any freedom, given the constant manipulation of advertisements, press chains, chain stores, and the draining of their finances. DP believed that the low level of aspiration among average Indians, moderated by group norms, results in greater balance in life. He cautioned against overlooking this in the pursuit of raising wants. Therefore, DP suggested that Indian sociologists should accept the group as their unit of analysis, rather than the individual, as this is the tradition of India and must be understood in its specific nature.

◆ Indian social life

2. Modern Indian Culture

DP's emphasis in his works evolved over time, reflecting his sensitivity to the changing environment. He drew



- ◆ Continuity of change

inspiration from both traditional and modern cultures. In his book, *“Modern Indian Culture: A Sociological Study,”* first published in 1942 and revised in 1947, argued that synthesis was the dominant organising principle of Indian culture. The British rule marked a turning point in Indian society, and the middle class initially supported it before successfully challenging it later. DP envisioned a peaceful, progressive India that united diverse regional cultures. Reorientation to tradition was essential for moving forward. DP did not consider himself a Marxist, but rather a “Marxologist,” and he believed that no genuine Modernisation could occur through mere imitation.

- ◆ Modernisation and inclusive tradition

DP feared cultural imperialism and saw Modernisation as a process of expanding, elevating, and revitalising traditional values and cultural patterns. Tradition is a principle of continuity, giving people the freedom to choose from various alternatives. DP’s ideas have been critiqued for not subjecting the socialist order itself to analysis and for taking its benign character for granted. He failed to recognise that a technology-oriented society is inherently exploitative and anti-human. The traditional and modern worldviews are rooted in different conceptions of time. DP’s concerns were viewed as those of a westernised Hindu intellectual, but his works should be revisited, reprinted, and reexamined to understand his ideas better.

- ◆ Conceptual meaning of tradition

3. Tradition

DP explains that the term ‘tradition’ is derived from the Latin word ‘tradere’, which means ‘to transmit’. In Sanskrit, tradition is referred to as ‘parampara’, which signifies succession, or ‘aitihya’, which shares its root with ‘itihasa’ or history. Traditions are believed to have a source, which could be scriptures, statements of sages, or mythical heroes with or without names. Despite their diverse origins, traditions are generally regarded as historically significant and valued. They are frequently cited, remembered, and appreciated. In fact, the prolonged continuity of traditions fosters social coherence and solidarity.

i) Dynamics of Tradition

DP argues that tradition serves the function of preserving, but it is not necessarily resistant to change. In fact, traditions can and do evolve over time. In Indian tradition, there are three principles of change: Sruti, Smriti, and Anubhava. Anubhava, or personal experience, is the most revolutionary

- ◆ Three principles of change

of these principles. Certain Upanishads are entirely based on personal experience. The personal experiences of the saint-founders of different sects or panths also led to collective experiences that brought about change in the prevailing socio-religious order. The experience of prem or love and sahaj or spontaneity of these saints and their followers was also evident in the Sufis among the Muslims. The traditional system gradually accommodated the dissenting voices. In Indian social action, there is room to accommodate rebels within the limits of the constitution. As a result, the caste system has blunted the class-consciousness of disadvantaged groups.

ii) Dialectics of Tradition and Modernity

- ◆ Assimilation of diverse culture

To conserve values from past experiences is a key strength of Indian tradition, as it reflects the daily life and emotions of the people. However, India has also adopted foreign elements such as technology, democracy, urbanisation, and bureaucracy. DP believes that adjustments will be made and Indians have the ability to adapt to these changes without disappearing like primitive tribes. The assimilation of tribal culture and Hindu-Muslim cultures demonstrate India's ability to accommodate diverse elements. As a result, the ability to adjust is inherent in India's culture.

- ◆ Tradition, modernity and cultural conflicts

In his works, DP Mukherjee emphasised the importance of traditions in understanding Indian society and framed his concept of dialectics in a liberal humanist perspective. He believed that the encounter of Modernisation with tradition during British colonialism created cultural contradictions and adaptations, and sometimes even conflicts. Yogendra Singh notes that DP Mukherjee's systematic analysis of Indian social processes focused on this encounter between tradition and the West, which led to the rise of a new middle class and generated a dialectical process of conflict and synthesis. The class structure of Indian society can provide the energy needed to drive this process. DP Mukherjee saw the interaction between tradition and modernity as the basis of Indian society, and he believed that understanding this dialectics was essential to analysing Indian society.

DP introduced his concept of tradition in 1942 with the publication of his book, *Modern Indian Culture: A Sociological Study*. In this book, he described tradition as a social and historical process that shaped Indian culture and gave rise to a number of general attitudes. The influences that contributed to this shaping were Buddhism, Islam, and western commerce



♦ Indian cultural synthesis

and culture. DP argued that Indian culture was not a mere replication of the western mode of living and thought nor a purely Asiatic product. Instead, it was a creative response to internal and external cultural and political challenges, which he referred to as cultural synthesis. DP did not view British rule as a permanent injury to Indian culture, but rather as an interruption. He recognised that the Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis was weakest at the level of cognitive categories, but he stressed on shared economic interests and celebrated achievements in music, architecture, and literature. DP did not consider the partition of the sub-continent as more than a geopolitical event, and he believed that the future would transcend the present in a true dialectical movement. He cautioned against politicising culture and emphasised the importance of roots.

♦ Tagore and Western thought

DP's views on the importance of roots are reflected in his comparison of Tagore and Bankimchandra Chatterji. He believed that Tagore's saturation with Indian traditions was deeper, which allowed him to assimilate a larger dose of western thought. DP acknowledged the influence of the West on Tagore, but argued that it should not be exaggerated. He saw Tagore as drawing upon some basic reservoir of the soil, of the people, and of the spirit at each stage of his evolution in prose, poetry, drama, music, and personality. This enabled Tagore to emerge with the capacity for larger investment.

iii) Composition of Traditions

♦ Indian tradition and diverse culture

DP believed that Indian tradition was formed as a result of historical processes and played a significant role in shaping the structure of Indian culture. He argued that these traditions were not limited to Hinduism but were a blend of various ideologies such as Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, tribal life, and western modernity. The process of synthesis was crucial in constructing these traditions. T.N. Madan interpreted how the principles of various religious ideologies shaped Indian traditions, highlighting that the dominant organising principle of the Hindu, the Buddhist, and the Muslim was synthesis. DP often quoted the Upanishads, with his favorite being charaivati, meaning to keep moving forward. He believed this reflected an indifference to the transient and sensate, with a preoccupation towards the subordination of the 'little self' to ultimately dissolve in the 'supreme reality'.

DP attempted to categorise Indian traditions into three main groups: primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary

◆ Categorisation of Indian tradition

traditions were considered to be original and intrinsic to Indian society, while secondary traditions were introduced with the arrival of Muslims in India. By the time the British arrived, there was still a lack of complete synthesis between Hindu and Muslim traditions at all levels of society. Although there was some degree of agreement on the utilisation of natural resources and religious traditions, significant differences remained in conceptual thought and aesthetics, which fell under the category of tertiary traditions.

iv) Sources of Traditions

◆ Criticism on DP's perspective

Indian sociologists have frequently discussed traditions, but little attention has been paid to identifying their sources and content. This is particularly evident in the case of D.P. Mukerji. While traditions play a central role in analysing India's Modernisation, DP does not specify the contents of these traditions. While Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Western culture are the primary sources of traditions, DP does not specify which traditions from these religions constitute the broader Indian traditions. T.N. Madan has identified DP's weakness in this regard, noting that DP's conception of Indian traditions might be a synthesis of Vedanta, Western liberation, and Marxism, but DP fails to synthesise other major traditions such as Islam and Buddhism. Madan observes that DP has not sufficiently elaborated on the content of tradition despite establishing its relevance to modernity. He notes that while DP has identified general categories that constitute tradition, he has not specified its empirical content. Madan suggests that DP may have relied more on institutional knowledge and general knowledge rather than conducting in-depth studies of the texts. Furthermore, Madan points out that DP did not conduct fieldwork to confront tradition in the way that anthropologists do.

◆ DP's economic observation

4. Nature and Method of Sociology

DP, who was trained as an economist, recognised the limitations of the practices of his fellow economists. He observed that they were focused on mastering and applying complex techniques and abstract generalisations, following the western model. They did not consider the economic development in India from a historical and cultural perspective. DP was alarmed by the fact that progressive groups in India struggled in terms of intellectual, economic and political actions, primarily because of their lack of knowledge and connection to the social reality of India.



◆ Sociology and social reality

To comprehend social reality, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of its various aspects and their interactions, as well as the interplay between tradition and future. This understanding cannot be achieved through narrow specialisations in particular disciplines. Sociology, however, can aid in this endeavor. Sociology has a unique position as a discipline with a floor that serves as the foundation of all social sciences and an open ceiling that allows for interdisciplinary synthesis. Neglecting the social base can lead to abstract and unhelpful theories, while research in other disciplines can be hindered by narrow scope. Sociology provides a holistic view of social reality, analysing both the details and the larger picture. DP recognised the need for a synoptic view of social life and emphasised the synthesis of social sciences.

◆ Indian society of transformation

According to DP, the primary objective of sociology is to comprehend the distinct forces that sustain a particular society over time. Therefore, sociologists in India must first understand the nature of tradition, which has upheld Indian society for centuries. However, sociology is not a defense of the status quo. DP firmly believes that sociology should ultimately illuminate the way out of the social system by analysing the process of transformation. DP's sociological analysis of Indian society highlights that it is changing without much disintegration. DP recognised that studying the Indian social system requires a unique approach to sociology due to its tradition, specific symbols, and patterns of economic and technological changes. DP argues that what is changing is more real and objective than change itself.

◆ Indian sociologist and indigenous knowledge on tradition

DP believes that the Indian sociologist must be an Indian first, meaning that they must share in the folkways, mores, customs, and traditions to understand the social system and what lies beneath it and beyond it. The Indian sociologist must adopt a comparative approach, highlighting the features shared by the Indian society with other societies and the specificity of its tradition. They must also aim to understand the meaning of tradition by examining its symbols and values. Additionally, the sociologist must take a dialectical approach to comprehend the conflict and synthesis of opposing forces of conservation and change.

5. Role of the New Middle Classes

When the British introduced the urban-industrial order in India, the traditional institutional networks were left behind and many traditional castes and classes were discovered. This

- ◆ Urban educated social class

required a new kind of social adaptation and adjustment. The urban educated middle classes became the focal point of the society, with their knowledge of modern social forces such as science, technology, democracy, and historical development that the West represented. However, they often remained ignorant of Indian culture and realities, despite being soaked with western ideas and lifestyles. DP observed that traditions have great powers of resistance and absorption and can even play a role in the physical adjustments and biological urges of human geography and demographic patterns. Despite this, the new society in India must utilise these modern qualities, and the middle classes need to be made aware of the importance of Indian traditions.

- ◆ Modernity with tradition

In India, traditions are deeply intertwined with aspects such as city planning and family planning, to the extent that architects and social reformers who ignore them do so at their own risk. As a result, India's middle classes are unable to lead the masses in building a modern India, having been disconnected from their indigenous traditions and losing touch with the masses. For India to progress on the path to modernity, it is essential to reconcile modernity with tradition by re-establishing the middle class's link with the masses. There should be neither an apologetic nor boastful attitude towards traditions, but rather an effort to harness their vitality to accommodate the changes required by modernity. Achieving a balance between individuation and association will be the key to success, enriching India and the world with new experiences.

- ◆ Modernising and westernising

6. Making of Indian History

It is worth noting that while DP shared Marx's views on history and British colonial rule in India, he had divergent opinions on the positive and negative consequences of British rule and pre-British traditions. Some Marxists have claimed DP as their own, despite his denial of being a Marxist and calling himself only a 'Marxologist'. Some non-Marxists have also labeled him as Marxist. Marx had characterised India as having a strong past but no known history, with a social condition unchanged since its remote antiquity. He claimed that British steam and science uprooted the union between agriculture and manufacturing industry. Marx listed England's crimes in India and argued that England had a double mission in India, one destructive and the other regenerating. For Marx, modernising India equated to westernising it, a view that DP disagreed with both



intellectually and emotionally. DP refused to feel ashamed or apologetic about India's past and believed that Modernising India would require adapting it to its traditions and history.

7. Modernisation

- ◆ Criticism on national movement

According to DP, the history of India was not characterised by significant class struggle, as the dominant forces were philosophy and religion. He viewed India's history as a long process of cultural synthesis, and believed that Indian history was Indian culture. DP believed that India's recent issues, such as hatred and partition, resulted from an incomplete assimilation of Islamic values. DP criticised the national movement for being anti-intellectual, and for a lack of connection between theory and practice, leading to impoverished thought and ineffective action. DP was concerned with artistic and intellectual creativity and believed that politics had ruined Indian culture.

- ◆ Need for new India

The division in Indian society persisted after the country gained independence, and DP saw no signs of reconciliation in the immediate post-independence period. When the government adopted planning as policy in the early 1950s, DP was concerned about the lack of a clear idea of the new man that was needed to criticise attempts to build a new India. He also identified the cause of widespread intellectual lethargy, stating that in 1955 progressive groups had failed intellectually and, as a result, in their economic and political actions because they lacked knowledge of and connection to India's social reality. These views were expressed in his 1958 paper "*Man and Plan in India*."

- ◆ Modernisation and cultural imperialism

DP's perspective on India's modernisation was that true modernisation could not be achieved through imitation. He believed that a society could not abandon its own cultural heritage and simultaneously internalise the historical experience of other societies, as this would only result in cultural subjugation. DP was more concerned about cultural imperialism than any other type. He believed that the only valid approach to modernisation was the one followed by visionaries such as Ram Mohan Roy and Rabindranath Tagore. These individuals attempted to make "the main currents of western thought and action... run through the Indian bed to remove its choking weeds in order that the ancient stream might flow."

DP's perspective on the dialectics between tradition and modernity was developed in his study of Tagore, which was

◆ Influence of Tagore

published in 1943, well before India gained independence. He believed that modernisation was a historical process that involved expanding, elevating, deepening, and revitalising traditional values and cultural patterns, rather than completely abandoning them in favor of the modern. From his perspective, tradition was not an obstacle but a condition for modernisation, providing the freedom to choose between alternatives and creating a cultural pattern that was a synthesis of old and new. New values and institutions needed to take root and imbibe character from the soil of tradition. Thus, modernity needed to be defined in relation to tradition rather than in denial of it. DP saw conflict as an intermediate stage in the dialectical triad, with the ultimate goal being the coincidentia oppositorum.

◆ Marxist dialectic with traditionalism

It is important to note that the preceding argument aligns with Marxist dialectic, which views relationships as determined by each other and thus requires a proper understanding of them through this relationship. However, the synthesis of opposites is not an inevitable result of history or a gift bestowed upon people's consciousness. DP believed that it is a dynamic social process and not synonymous with traditionalism. DP considered history a continuous process and saw value in the Marxist approach to understanding it. He believed that mindless imitation and loss of autonomy lead to dehumanisation and that self-consciousness is the form of modernisation. DP's writings from the 1950s suggest that the content of modernisation includes nationalism, democracy, utilisation of science and technology for nature's harnessing, planning for social and economic development, and cultivation of rationality. DP identified the engineer as the typical modern person, one who is both social and technical.

2.2.2 A.R. Desai



A.R. Desai was born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiadin Gujarat and died in 1994 at Baroda. He consistently advocated and applied dialectical-historical model in his sociological studies. He closely studied the works of Marx and Engels and the writings of Trotsky. He may be regarded as one of the pioneers in introducing the modern Marxist approach to empirical investigations involving bibliographical and field research. He rejects any interpretations of tradition with reference to religion, rituals and festivities. It is essentially a secular phenomenon. He finds it in family, village and other social institutions. He also does not find the origin of tradition in western culture. He considers that the emerging contradictions in the Indian process of social transformation arise mainly from the growing nexus among the capitalist bourgeoisie, the rural petty-bourgeoisie and a state apparatus all drawn from similar social roots.

2.2.2.1 Methodology

- ◆ Desai's understanding of Indian society

Among Indian sociologists one who has consistently advocated and applied dialectical-historical model in his sociological studies is A.R. Desai. Desai closely studied the works of Marx and Engels and the writings of Leon Trotsky by whom he was very much influenced. He may be regarded as one of the pioneers who introduced the modern Marxist approach to empirical investigations involving bibliographical and field research.

Following facts are worth mentioning about Desai:

- ◆ Tradition is secular

1. Desai alone among Indian sociologists has consistently applied Marxist methods in his treatment of Indian social structure and its processes. He is a doctrinaire Marxist.
2. He rejects any interpretations of tradition with reference to religion, rituals and festivities; it is essentially a secular phenomenon. Its nature is economic and it originates and develops in economic. He finds it in family, village and other social institutions. He also does not find the origin of tradition in western culture.



◆ Marxist perspective

3. He studied mainly nationalism and its social configuration, his examination of community development programmes for economic development in villages, diagnosis of the interface between state and society in India or the relationship between polity and social structure, treatment of urban slums and their demographic problems, and finally the study of peasant movements are all based on a Marxist method of historical-dialectical materialism.

◆ Social unrest due to capitalism

4. He considers that the emerging contradictions in the Indian process of social transformation arise mainly from the growing nexus among the capitalist bourgeoisie, the rural petty-bourgeoisie and a state apparatus and industrial working classes by sheer of its power and skilful stratagems. The contradiction, however, is not resolved. It only takes new cumulative forms and re-emerges in the form of protests and social movements. The social unrest is rooted in the capitalist path of development followed by India, bequeathed to it as a legacy of the national movement.

2.2.2.2 Analysis of Indian Society through Marxist Approach

Marx pointed out that different sub-formations within a society could not be understood adequately if seen in the context of the historical level. Thus,

◆ Forces and formation of social organisation

1. The Marxist approach endeavours to locate, within a specific society, the forces which preserve and forces which prompt it to change, i.e., the forces driving to take a leap into a new or a higher form of social organisation, which would unleash the productive power of mankind to a next higher level.

◆ Relations of production and social reality

2. Further, Desai argues that the methodology adopted by social scientists is apt to understand social reality from the ideology of capitalism. But that is a false finding. He further argues that changes need to be interpreted from the perspective of production relation. It is precisely the method he has applied.



♦ Economic factor and autonomy

♦ industrial relations and capitalist development

♦ Hegemony and capitalist state

♦ Practices to capitalist path

♦ Indian society and capitalist economy

♦ Risk of Indian capitalism

3. The Marxist approach further considers that focusing on the type of property relations prevailing in the Indian society as crucial-axial element for properly understanding the nature will be crudely reducing of every phenomenon to economic factor; it also not denies the autonomy, or prevalence of distinct institutional and normative features peculiar to a particular society. For instance, according to Desai, it does not deny the necessity of understanding institutions like caste system, religions, linguistic or tribal groups or even specific cultural traditions which are characteristics of the Indian society.

4. Desai feels that adoption of the Marxist approach will be helpful in studying the industrial relations, not merely as management-labour relations, and also in the context of the state wedded to capitalist path of development, shaping these relations.

5. The Marxist approach will also assist in understanding why institutions generating higher knowledge-products, sponsored, financed and basically shaped by the state, pursuing a path of capitalist development. This understanding will expose the myth spread about state, as welfare neutral state and reveal it as basically a capitalist state.

6. The constitution evolved is bourgeois constitution and the leadership is representing capitalist class and is reshaping the economy and society on capitalist path. The slogan of socialistic pattern is a hoax to create illusion and confuse the masses. The real intentions and practices are geared to the development on capitalist lines.

7. According to Desai, the bourgeoisie is the dominant class in India. The Indian society is based on the capitalist economy. The dominant culture in our country is therefore the culture of the dominant capitalist class.

8. Indian capitalism was a by-product of imperialist capitalism. Indian capitalism was born during the declining phase of world capitalism when, due to

the general crisis of capitalism, even in advanced capitalist countries, the ruling bourgeoisie, not cognisant of the cause of the crisis, have been increasingly abandoning rationalism and materialist philosophies and retrograding to religio-mystical world outlook.

◆ Democratic education

9. Desai argues that Indian bourgeoisie built up a fundamentally secular bourgeois democratic state, which has been imparting modern scientific, technological and liberal democratic education.

10. This class and its intelligentsia in the cultural field are revivalist and more and more popularising, supporting and spreading old religious and idealistic philosophical concepts among the people.

11. The social role played by this culture is reactionary since it gives myopic picture of the physical universe and the social world, a mis-explanation of the fundamental causes of the economic and social crisis, opiates the consciousness of the masses and tries to divert the latter from advancing on the road of specific solution of their problems.

◆ Social role of culture

2.2.2.3 Important contributions of Desai

- i. Village structure
- ii. Social background of Indian nationalism
- iii. Peasant struggles
- iv. State and society
- v. Transformation of Indian society

i. Village Structure

◆ Nature of village economy

The pre-British Indian village is often characterised as a self-sufficient unit where the majority of the population consisted of peasants who held hereditary rights to cultivate their land. The village economy was based on primitive agricultural techniques and handicrafts, with exchange of goods limited to the village community. The village council, representing the community, was the de facto owner of the village land. The pre-British Indian society was highly stratified, with the individual largely subordinated to the caste, family, and village panchayat. The culture of pre-



British India was feudal and mystical, reflecting its low-level stationary economy and social rigidity. While there were some quantitative changes over time, the society remained largely unchanged in its qualitative nature.

ii. Social Background of Indian Nationalism

Desai utilised the Marxist approach to analyse the concept of 'nationalism' in India during the British colonial period. He employed the historical-dialectical materialism approach to investigate various types of movements, including rural and urban, caste and class structures, social mobility, education, and other aspects of Indian society. Desai's seminal work, *The Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, not only introduced a Marxist academic perspective but also combined sociology with history. He, like other Marxists, explained the traditional social background of Indian nationalism by production relations in his classic work. Desai's book is a remarkable attempt to trace the emergence of Indian nationalism from a dialectical perspective. He claimed that India's nationalism was a result of the material conditions that were created by British colonialism. The British introduced industrialisation and modernisation, which resulted in new economic relationships. These relationships were predominantly a stabilising factor in the continuity of traditional institutions in India, which would undergo changes as these relations changed.

- ◆ Historical dialectical understanding

According to Desai, economic relations are linked with traditions, and any change in the former can eventually bring changes in the latter. He argues that the creation of new social and material conditions like industries, economic growth, and education would lead to the disintegration of the caste system. Unlike traditional definitions of tradition based on caste, religion, or ritual, Desai's definition highlights the dialectical relationship between traditions and the Indian economy and production relations. However, Yogendra Singh critiques Desai's approach, arguing that while his Marxist principles offer valuable insight into analysing the Indian situation, his theoretical framework lacks empirical support and can be challenged by the strength of substantial data.

- ◆ Economic relations and Indian economy

Desai employed a Marxist framework in his works to examine the growth of capitalism in India. He analysed the emergence of various social forces that dramatically transformed the Indian economy and society during the colonial period. According to Desai, the state that

- ◆ Marxian approach of Desai

emerged after independence was a capitalist state, and the administrative apparatus of the state played a dual role in protecting the propertied classes and suppressing the exploited classes. In his book, *India's Path of Development*, Desai challenged traditional communist parties and Marxist scholars who advocated for an alliance with the progressive bourgeoisie, semi-feudalism, foreign imperialist control over the Indian economy, a "two-stage theory of revolution," or a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism in India. Desai's works also include several edited volumes on rural sociology, urbanisation, labour movements, peasant struggles, modernisation, religion, and democratic rights. These works provide an abundance of reference material for students, researchers, and activists.

iii. Peasant Struggles

- ◆ Comparing peasant and agrarian struggle

Desai's two-volume work titled *Peasant Struggles in India* and *Agrarian Struggles in India after Independence* provides an excellent compilation of material on peasant struggles in India, both during the colonial period and after independence. Through his work, Desai emphasises the difference in the character of struggles between these two periods. According to him, current agrarian struggles are being waged not only by the newly-emerged propertied classes but also by the agrarian poor, particularly the agrarian proletariat. The former seeks a greater share in the fruits of development while the latter struggles for survival and a better life for themselves, often comprising of pauperised peasants and laborers from low castes and tribal communities. Desai argued that progress could only be achieved by radically transforming the exploitative capitalist system in India. The theme of the state was explored in several of his studies.

iv. State and Society

Desai's book *State and Society in India* critiques the theories of modernisation that are widely accepted in academic circles. According to Desai, these theories promote the idea of modernisation on a capitalist path as a desirable value, serving as an ideological tool for the ruling class. Desai also notes that Marxist scholars have failed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the post-independence Indian state's class character, class role, and its economic, repressive, and ideological functions. In his later works, Desai focuses on the repressive role of the state and growing resistance to it. His book *Violation of Democratic Rights in India* highlights how the state violates the democratic rights of minorities, women,



◆ Capitalist interest and Indian Society

slum dwellers in urban India, the press, and other media. Desai's academic pursuits have revolved around the study of nationalism, rural social structure, economic and social politics of change in India, and the structure of state and society. His primary objective in these studies has been to reveal the contradictions and anomalies that arise as a result of the interlocking of capitalist and bourgeoisie interests in Indian society. Desai contends that the polarisation of class interests, particularly those of the bourgeoisie, forms the foundation of modern society in India, with class contradictions and the dialectical logic embedded within it. Desai's numerous writings thoroughly expose this dialectic, consistently pointing out the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in policies and the process of change.

v. Transformation of Indian Society

◆ Industrialisation, Capitalism and new social class

The shift from feudal economy to capitalist economy in pre-British India was brought about by the British conquest. The British government implemented capitalist policies in trade, industry, and finance, leading to the disruption of the old economic system. This resulted in the destruction of old land relations and traditional artisans and the emergence of new land relations and modern industries. The village commune was replaced by modern peasant proprietors or zamindars who owned the land privately. The disappearance of the artisan class accompanied the emergence of new classes such as capitalist industrial workers, agricultural laborers, tenants, and merchants. This transformation not only affected the economic structure of Indian society, but also its social makeup. The new land revenue system, commercialisation of agriculture, and fragmentation of land, further transformed the Indian village, resulting in a growing polarisation of classes in agrarian areas, rural poverty, and exploitation by landowners. The new class structure in agrarian society included zamindars, absentee landlords, tenants, peasant proprietors, agricultural laborers, money lenders, and merchants. Similarly, in urban society, new classes emerged such as capitalist industrial workers, petty traders, and professional classes like doctors, lawyers, and engineers.

The British government implemented various measures in India including railways, postal services, centralised law, English education, and modern industry. These initiatives brought about a qualitative change in Indian society. Despite

- ◆ Administrative changes and Indian nationalism

the exploitative nature of these efforts, they unintentionally led to the unification of Indian society. The role of railways and the press played a significant role in this regard, bringing together the scattered and disintegrated Indian people into the mainstream. This led to the emergence of social movements, collective representations, national sentiments, and consciousness among the Indian people, and the formation of unions at various levels. This social infrastructure gave rise to nationalism, the freedom movement, and the awakening of Indian nationalism.

Summarised Overview

Dialectical approach is a method of analysing social phenomena that views them as a result of opposing forces, contradictions and conflicts. DP Mukherjee and A.R. Desai were notable scholars who applied this approach in their sociological analyses. DP Mukherjee emphasised the importance of understanding the historical, economic, and cultural factors that shape social relations in Indian society. He viewed society as a complex and dynamic system that is constantly evolving and changing. His work on dialectical materialism highlighted the role of class struggle in shaping social structures. A.R. Desai, on the other hand, applied the dialectical approach to his study of agrarian relations in India. He argued that the relationship between landlords and peasants was a result of the contradictions and conflicts between their interests. Both scholars made significant contributions to the field of sociology using the dialectical approach, which continues to be an important method for analysing social phenomena.

Assignments

1. What is the dialectical approach to studying Indian social structure as described by D. P. Mukherjee? Explain the key features of this approach and how it differs from other approaches to studying society.
2. According to D. P. Mukherjee, what are the main contradictions in Indian social structure? How do these contradictions impact the social and economic development of India?
3. Discuss the role of caste in Indian society according to the dialectical approach of D. P. Mukherjee. How has the caste system evolved over time and what implications does this have for contemporary Indian society?



4. What is the relationship between economic development and social change in India, as described by D. P. Mukherjee? How has the dialectical relationship between economic development and social change played out in India's history
5. How does D. P. Mukherjee's dialectical approach to studying Indian social structure help us to better understand the complexities of contemporary Indian society? In what ways might this approach be used to inform policies and programs aimed at promoting social and economic development in India?
6. According to A. R. Desai, what is the relationship between social unrest and nationalism? How has social unrest contributed to the rise of nationalist movements in India?
7. What factors have contributed to the emergence of social unrest in India, as described by A. R. Desai? How have these factors impacted the development of Indian society and politics?
8. Discuss the role of caste, class, and ethnicity in contributing to social unrest in India, as described by A. R. Desai. How have these factors intersected with each other to create complex social dynamics?
9. How has the state responded to social unrest in India, as described by A. R. Desai? What are some of the key policies and strategies that have been used to address social unrest, and how effective have they been?
10. In what ways has social unrest influenced the development of Indian nationalism, as described by A. R. Desai?

Suggested Readings

1. Bose, S. (2010). *The Nation as a Fantasy: Discourses on Nationalism in India*. New Delhi : Cambridge University Press.
2. Kohli, A. (1990). *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
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1. Beteille, A. (1996). *Caste, Class, and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. California: University of California Press.
2. Chakrabarty, D. (1995). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. US: Princeton University Press.
3. Desai, A. R. (1984). *Social Unrest and Nationalism in India*. Mumbai: Popular Prakashan.
4. Mukherjee, D. P. (1968). *Indian Social Structure and Values: The Dialectic of Unity and Diversity*. Mumbai: Asia Publishing House.
5. Sharma, R. K. (2012). *Sociology of Indian Society*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Dist.
6. Srinivas, M. N. (1952). *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Subaltern Approach

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the significance of subaltern approach to interpret Indian society
- ♦ narrate the contribution of David Hardiman and his approach to Devi movement in South Gujarat
- ♦ explain Ambedkar's perspective on caste in Indian Society

Background

Subaltern study is a field of historical and cultural analysis that emerged in the 1980s as a response to the dominant narratives of Indian history, which were seen as privileging the perspectives of the ruling elite. The term “subaltern” refers to those who are marginalised or excluded from positions of power and influence, such as peasants, workers, women, and other oppressed groups. The subaltern approach seeks to challenge and subvert these dominant narratives by bringing the perspectives and experiences of subaltern groups to the forefront. This involves looking beyond the official records and archives of the ruling elite and engaging with the everyday lives and struggles of ordinary people.

One of the key figures in the development of subaltern studies was David Hardiman. He is a renowned scholar who has contributed significantly to the field of Indian history using the subaltern approach. The subaltern approach is a perspective that emphasises the importance of examining the history and experiences of marginalised and oppressed groups. One of the key movements that Hardiman has studied using this approach is the Devi Movement, which emerged in the late 19th century in Western India. The Devi Movement was a socio-religious reform movement that sought to empower and uplift women who were marginalised and oppressed by social and cultural norms. Hardiman's work on the Devi Movement highlights the agency of women in challenging patriarchal structures and the ways in which their struggles were intertwined with larger social and political movements. Through his use of the subaltern approach, Hardiman has shed light on the experiences and struggles of marginalised groups, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Indian history.



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was a prominent social reformer, jurist, and politician who dedicated his life to fighting against caste discrimination in India. He was born into a Dalit (formerly known as untouchable) family and faced discrimination and social exclusion throughout his life. Ambedkar believed that the caste system was the root cause of social and economic inequality in India and that it needed to be abolished to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all citizens. He worked tirelessly to raise awareness about caste discrimination and its impact on society, and he drafted the Indian Constitution, which outlawed caste-based discrimination and made provisions for affirmative action to uplift marginalised communities. *Annihilation of Caste* is one of Ambedkar's most famous works, which he wrote in 1936 in response to a speech by a prominent Brahmin leader who argued that caste was a natural and beneficial system. In the book, Ambedkar critiques the caste system and argues for its complete annihilation, offering a scathing critique of Hinduism and its role in perpetuating caste discrimination. The book remains a seminal work in Indian history and is considered an important text for understanding the ongoing struggle against caste discrimination in India.

To engage with the subaltern approach, learners should have a basic understanding of the historical and cultural context of the region they are studying, as well as an awareness of the ways in which power operates within society. They should also be prepared to engage critically with dominant narratives and to explore alternative sources of historical and cultural knowledge, such as oral histories, songs, and other forms of popular culture. Overall, the subaltern approach offers an exciting and dynamic way of studying history and culture, one that is rooted in the experiences and struggles of ordinary people and that challenges us to rethink our assumptions about power and privilege.

Keywords

Subordination, Hinduism, Dominance, Hierarchy, Buddhism

Discussion

The literal meaning of “Subaltern” is “belonging to an inferior rank or position.” Sociologists study and view the Indian society from various perspectives; subaltern perspective is one of them. The subaltern perspective can be depicted through caste, race, occupation, class, colour, and many more factors. It usually means subordination in any field, and it embodies features of dominance and submissive behaviours. Numerous people gave their own subaltern

◆ Understanding the concept Subaltern

perspectives. David Hardiman, born in Pakistan, introduced his perspective via his book, *The Coming of Devi* which showcased a movement which suggested that the Adivasi's and tribes of India should change their lifestyles. These types of movements have now been eradicated and can no longer be seen in the modern India. In Hardiman's theory, three problems about the Indian society were pointed out. One, the word "subaltern" was not defined properly or adequately. Two, it has already been existing in our Indian society since a very long time. Three, it is always in comparison to something, i.e. it is always relative. Thus, relatively, there must be levels of everything. If something is at the top, there has to be something at the bottom too and there has to exist a lot of distinction in the higher and lower levels.

◆ Dalit in Indian caste system

In the 1900s, our country had different rules and regulations for the "untouchables". The untouchables or "Dalits" were looked down upon. They were deprived of all the basic privileges that were accessible to all the other higher caste groups. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, from our country, was the first untouchable to go abroad for higher education. After returning back to India, he observed the subaltern nature of the Indian society closely and proposed the idea of reservation for the oppressed classes to make them grow, to provide them equal rights and opportunities, and to grant access to other privileges as well. Similar to the untouchables or "Dalits", in the primitive era, the Indian society was divided into 4 parts, the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Brahmins were considered the priestly people and Kshatriyas were considered the rulers and the warriors. Both of these castes belonged to the top two positions of the Indian caste system, with Brahmins being at the top. They had access to all the rights, opportunities and privileges. They were treated royally and with respect by the lower castes. Vaishyas were in the third position in the four varnas, and they were the artisans, merchants, farmers, and tradesmen. On the bottom, there were Shudras who were considered the labour class. The rank of this era's "Dalits" and the primitive era's Shudras can be considered equal. Even the presence of these lower castes was considered tainted. They were not allowed to attend any ceremonies and were supposed to stay out when it came to any decision-making process in villages. They were also not allowed to enter religious places.

Even though our society is still divided into numerous castes like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs),



- ◆ Upliftment of the marginalised

Other Backward Classes (OBCs) etc., there are many reforms and schemes developed for the growth of these minorities. In some corner, misuse of such reforms is also taking place, but as far as the development of the country is concerned, it has really become an indispensable task to let the minorities grow.

2.3.1 David Hardiman



David Hardiman is a historian who focused on the history of modern India. Born in Pakistan and brought up in England, he finished his B.A. in History from London School of Economics. As a Research Fellow Hardiman spent his time in India during the 1980s at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. South Asian History was his field of study and he wrote on this from the 1960s. Over a decade of his life was spent in India, studying the colonial effects. Colonial period in South Asian history, especially the effects of the same on rural life found its space in the works of Hardiman. He was also interested in the power relations and the independence movement in India. Indian nationalism, environmental as well as medical history also interested him.

As a research fellow, he accompanied the researchers on their fieldwork, gaining first hand data about the various issues, especially with development-linked research that was gaining currency at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. During this spell, he became aware of the implications of the health and environmental issues on the rural poor. His later works focused on the medical and environmental history during the colonial period in India. He spoke of the limits of your knowledge as a researcher and also the danger of speaking 'for' the people. Our focus will be on his work on the Adivasi assertion in the Western India, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (1987), and the work exploring the usurer and peasant relation, *Feeding the Baniya: Peasants and Usurers in Western India* (1996).

- ◆ Member of subaltern studies

David Hardiman is a founding member of subaltern studies group and written on modern history of India highlighting the impact of colonial rule on rural society. He has examined the power structure in the rural society where the money lenders exert their dominance on the peasantry and the role of the tribal against liquor dealers etc.

- ◆ Hardiman's analysis of the marginalised

Hardiman's work on Devi Movement showed their assertion against shaukaars (money lenders) and *Feeding the Baniya* brings out the exploitation and domination usurers had over the subaltern classes in India. His book reflects the integration of small-scale agrarian society with capitalist

economy. He explores the nature of the domination and the changing world of villagers as they try to negotiate the changes faced by them in their surroundings.

2.3.1.1 Major Works of Hardiman

1. *The Quit India Movement in Gujarat* (1980)
2. *Peasant Nationalists of Gujarat: Kheda District, 1917-1934* (1981)
3. *The Coming of Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (1987)
4. *Peasant Resistance in India: 1858-1914* (1992)
5. *Subaltern Studies VIII: Essays in Honour of Ranajit Guha* (1994)
6. *Feeding the Baniya: Peasants and Usurers in Western India* (1996)
7. *Gandhi in his Time and Ours* (2003)
8. *Histories for the Subordinated* (2006)
9. *Missionaries and their Medicine: A Christian Modernity for Tribal India* (2008)

◆ Hardiman's perspectives on rural society

The main focus of his work has been on the colonial period in South Asian history, concentrating in particular on the effects of colonial rule on rural society, relationships of power at various levels, the Indian independence movement with a specific focus on the popular bases to Indian nationalism, and environmental and medical history. In the late 1970s he became involved with a group of historians studying the social history of subordinate groups in South Asia. The Gramscian term 'subaltern' – meaning 'subordinate group' – was chosen to emphasise the centrality of relationships of domination and subordination in a society in which class division had not developed as it had in the industrialised world. He has carried out a detailed examination of the Indian nationalist movement at the local level in Gujarat – Gandhi's home region – bringing out the disjuncture between the aims and agendas of the Gandhian leadership and local peasant activists. He has examined the power-structures of rural society, carrying out for example a detailed study of the hegemonic controls exercised by usurers and the limits to that hegemony, as seen in particular in revolts. He has also studied a movement of assertion by adivasis (tribal people) against liquor dealers who had been granted a monopoly



with the right of supply by the British and who had enriched themselves at the expense of the adivasis.

◆ Hardiman's view on Gandhi

David Hardiman has also written a book on Gandhi and his legacy in India and the world. In this, he brings to the topic a deep knowledge of Gandhi's particular social milieu. His engagement with contemporary social issues while living in India has also been of crucial importance in assessing Gandhi's legacy in India. From 1983 to 1989 he worked as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat in Gujarat, India. There was a strong emphasis on the evaluation of government and NGO development projects, and besides carrying on his historical research and writing, he became involved in a wide range of development-linked research projects.

We would discuss his following works:

1. *Hardiman's Sociological Perspective of Subaltern*
2. *The Devi Movement in South Gujarat*
3. *Feeding the Baniya*

1. Hardiman's Sociological Perspective of Subaltern

◆ Domination and subordination

Hardiman's interest in the topic was stimulated by his participation in the subaltern studies project, one of the chief objective of the study was to study the relationship of domination and subordination in India. He was also inspired by the work of western Marxist historians, notably E.P Thompson on systems of moral economy, and Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese on the blend of ruthless exploitation with paternalism in the slave system of the American south. These influences, coupled with insights gained from the writings of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and, in the context of western India D.D. Kosambi, Jairus Banaji and Frank Perlin, have provided some of the main foundations for his work.

The study of Indian society has been done by sociologists through various perspectives. Subaltern perspective is one of these perspectives. One of the exponents of this perspective is David Hardiman who has used it in his study *The Coming of Devi*. This is basically a movement among adivasis of western India to change their established way of life. Such movements, although, have been reported from almost all Adivasi tracts of India over the past century, they have until now been relegated to the margin of modern Indian history.

◆ Hardiman and Subaltern

One of the enduring secrets of the subaltern perspective is that it existed only as a broad framework. A detailed enquiry, undertaken by some of its critics, usually pointed out serious continuities with other kinds of coeval research. The discontinuities, could be noticed, were rather minor and sometimes merely idiosyncratic. When Ranajit Guha insisted in his seminal book on peasant insurgency that one of the ways into the minds of the subaltern was to read the inverse meaning into the routine reports coming from the elite.

◆ Critiques of Subaltern perspectives

Three kinds of problems were pointed out: One is that the term 'subaltern' was not adequately defined/ identified. Two, the subaltern perspective had already been in use for a very long time. Three, the idea of subaltern was a relative concept; subaltern was always relative to something, or someone else. It referred to something that was 'below'. "Below what?" "Below that which was above?" Such distinctions, even though they were not very strict, acquired meaning through the practice of subaltern studies. In this regard, one could take the studies done by Hardiman to be illustrative. There was also a problem that the distinction between the subaltern and the elite was considerably a context dependent distinction. A little change, as Hardiman noticed in his study of the Devi movement in Gujarat, could place a tribal leader in the role of an exploiter rather than the one who is being exploited.

2. The Devi Movement in South Gujarat

◆ Lack of recognition by government

Hardiman tried to look at subaltern perspective from his study of the Devi movement in south Gujarat (Western Maharashtra region). He observes the mass movement in south Gujarat in early 20th century by the native masses and termed it as 'Devi movement.' It was peaceful and led by tribals themselves, spread over a large region, involved a considerable number of people and focused on bringing social reform among the tribals. He noticed that this movement among the adivasis was virtually ignored by the contemporary government, the newspapers, the nationalists and subsequently the historians. There is no full-length monograph on such movements, he remarked, nor were they documented adequately. Insofar as the activities of the tribals were noticed by the nationalists, it was to remark that they were done under the auspices and influence of outsiders, e.g., Gandhi, in the case of Devi movement, or some social worker of tribal origins who would be presumed to have worked for the so-called upliftment of the tribals.



◆ Observers denied tribals initiative

Even, the socialists, who claimed to be more at one with the common people completely denied any role for the tribals other than as mere followers who could take any decision by themselves and had to be completely directed by the socialists who had come from outside. Hardiman notices that in this way the existing observers of the tribal life had completely denied the tribals any initiative, any decision-making capacity or any ability to decide what is good for them. Such denial of existence to the tribals (or, as a general case, to other subaltern groups) is what Hardiman and others following the subaltern perspective criticised.

◆ Movement of resistance

There were many individual and group efforts to warm the adivasis to take liquor. It included rural elite and Bhajan – Mandal groups of the village, but the remarkable change in the consciousness of the adivasis came with Devi movement. *The Coming of Devi* by Hardiman is a work on the assertion of the adivasis in western India against the Shaukars (moneylenders). The Devi movement started as a small propitiation ceremony among the fisher-folk of Palghar taluk in late 1921. Later, it spread to other parts of Gujarat. In the case of Devi movement, Hardiman noticed that the tribals had involved themselves in a social reform movement not merely as an effort of reforming themselves, by getting rid of the drinking habit, but also as a rebellion against the domination of Parsi liquor vendors who had brought them into debt bondage and also against the domination by large landlords.

This 'Devi' was supposed to have come from the mountains to the east, and she expressed her demands through the mouth of spirit mediums. The medium sat before the crowd, holding red clothes in their hands, they began to shake their heads.

Then, they pronounced the commands of Devi:

◆ Words of Devi

- i. Stop drinking liquor and toddy.
- ii. Stop eating meat and fish.
- iii. Live a clean and simple life.
- iv. Man should take bath twice a day.
- v. Women should take bath thrice a day.
- vi. Have nothing to do with Parsis.

◆ Political mobilisation

When they finished, the girl who was dressed as Devi was offered coins or gifts. Later, they sat for a common dinner (Bhandara). The collective and 'Devi' words have brought remarkable change in the consciousness among the adivasis. This led to their political mobilisation and ultimately to raise their standard of living by going away from the clutches of Shahukars and Parsis. But what was the result of this kind of quite rebellion, Hardiman asked. It did not result in the total emancipation of the adivasis, he conceded. For, the domination of the Parsis was replaced by the more hegemonic domination of the elite among the adivasis over all others. But it did result in other kinds of benefits.

◆ Collective action of tribals

In the region where the Devi movement spread the far more exploitative capitalist farmer could not find roots. The adivasis managed to retain a modicum of dignity and self-control in the face of ever increasing incursions of capitalist relations protected by the colonial government and even after the movement dissolved it still left a lingering impression on the tribals of this region by making them more assertive and giving them memories, which involves self-help and action for the collective good. So, if the uniqueness and self-dignity in the current existence of the tribals of the forested regions of south Gujarat had to be understood, it could be done so only by first understanding the special way in which the tribals created and responded to the Devi movement. If the social scientists were to ignore the perspective, they would lose out on the special understanding that David Hardiman and others of his ilk provided.

◆ Domain of power and state formation

3. Feeding the Baniya

The book entitled, *Feeding the Baniya* represents an attempt to understand something of the quality of power which usurers have exercised over subaltern classes in rural India over several centuries. As well as the obvious economic element, this power had strong political and cultural dimensions to it. It was very tenacious, not only surviving the transition to colonial rule, but thriving in the new environment. Even when resisted in popular revolt, usurers – personified in popular imagination by the figure of the Baniya merchant – seemed to have a remarkable ability to bounce back, redefining the terms of their relationship with the subaltern to their perpetual advantage. Hardiman attempts to see how such a domain of power was forged; how, over the centuries, usurers managed to adapt their practice so effectively within succeeding state formations;



and how the classes whom they exploited related to them, and also resisted them. A peasant proverb in western India gives expression to the hegemony of Baniya usurers over the peasants: "I love the Sheth-Baniya so much that I have given him a fat belly." The indebted peasantry feeds the Baniya merchants' never ending demands for agrarian produce, enriching the usurers while being itself trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Feeding the Baniya reflects the integration of a small-scale agrarian society with a larger capitalist economy. Hardiman investigated the deep meanings involved in the relationship between the villager and the moneylender. Anyone who has had any experience of the borrowing practices in villages knows how usurious the village moneylender is. Yet it has often puzzled observers that the villagers prefer going to him for help in times of need rather than visit the local branch of the State Bank of India or other banks even though they provide loans at much cheaper rates and without much difficulty. A crucial part of the answer to this puzzle was provided by Hardiman's study. Rich in historical and sociological details, the study pointed out that the moneylender was located in a complex web of domination exercised by the local dominant classes. The moneylender himself might not always be the dominating person, but he definitely was the front for the other dominant sections of local society.

- ◆ Relation between money lender and village



- ◆ Hegemonic power and peasantry



Here was a society not sufficiently suffused with capitalist relations and institutions, the moneylender provided the small-scale agrarian producer with adequate means to relate to the wider capitalist world. In this detailed and comprehensive study of the relationship between peasants and Baniya usurers in western India, Hardiman examines how and why usurers have, over the centuries, managed to exert their power over the peasantry. An explanation purely in terms of economics of the relationship is, he argues, not adequate. Crucial also has been the support extended to the Baniyas by successive states from pre-colonial to colonial times. But, over and above, this is the ideological or hegemonic power that Baniyas have been able to exert over their clients.

Applying insights derived from the works of Gramsci, Foucault and Bourdieu, Hardiman explores the nature of this hegemony, seeing how a shared set of beliefs could help the Baniyas consolidate their power. Despite this, the relationship was by no means a harmonious one. There

◆ Gramsci and Hegemony

was a whole range of tensions which at times gave rise to protest and resistance. His book *Feeding the Baniya* was conceived initially as a study of usury in Gujarat, which has been his chief area for historical research. However, in the course of the investigations, the project expanded to include other parts of western India. Rajasthan is also included in part because it was the heartland of the Marwari Baniya – a critical group for any study of usury.

◆ Changing world of villagers

Feeding the Baniya spans the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods of Indian history. The role of merchant and usurer capital in the appropriation of the peasants' surplus is examined, revealing crucial changes over time and it is argued that the institution of usury has undergone a metamorphosis in the period since Indian independence. Once again, as in the case of his study of the Devi movement, Hardiman had provided an additional perspective into the changing world of the villagers as they tried to cope with the changes in the wider society around them.

2.3.2 Dr. B.R. Ambedkar



Born on April 14th, 1891, in Mhow Cantt near Indore, Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was a member of the Mahar caste, which was considered an untouchable caste in Maharashtra. His father, Ramji Sakpal, did not believe in caste and was a follower of Saint Kabir. During his childhood, Ambedkar was known as Bhim Sakpal. After completing his high school education in Satara (Maharashtra) in 1907, he enrolled at Elphinstone College in Bombay. Maharaja Gayakwad of Baroda awarded him the 'Gayakwad scholarship' for his college education, which he utilised to pursue his M.A. at Columbia University in the USA. He became the first Indian from an untouchable caste to study abroad. In 1917, he earned his Ph.D. from Columbia University, and the following year, he went to London to study law and economics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In 1921, he earned both his Master of Science and Ph.D. degrees from the University of London for his thesis titled, *The Problem of the Rupee*. While completing his Bar at Law, Dr. Ambedkar rejected the caste system and converted to Buddhism, along with five lakh others, during a historic congregation on October 14th, 1956, in Nagpur. He passed away on December 6th, 1956.

2.3.2.1 Writings of Ambedkar

1. *The Untouchables, who were they?*
2. *Who were the Shudras?*
3. *States and Minorities*
4. *Emancipation of the Untouchables*
5. *Annihilation of Caste*

a) Ambedkar and Subaltern Perspective

◆ Impact of Caste on Dalits

B.R. Ambedkar, an eminent political thinker in India, conducted a thorough examination of the caste system in India and its inflexible nature. He focused on the concerns faced by Dalits and Adivasi subalterns, analysing the profound impact of the caste system on individuals belonging to lower castes. Although these issues were initially overlooked during the early stages of the Indian national movement, Ambedkar hailing from a lower caste background himself, dedicated his entire life to combating the caste system's discriminatory and marginalising effects on Dalit subalterns. Upon completing his education abroad, he returned to India and embarked on a career in law. In 1920, he established the Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha in Bombay, aiming to advocate for Dalit interests and present their issue to the government for resolution. Ambedkar not only criticised the caste system, but also played a significant role in the movement to eliminate caste-based discrimination. He actively assisted Dalits in asserting their right to equal status and opportunities, thereby striving for equality with other classes.

◆ Etymology of the term Dalit

The term 'Dalit' is commonly used to refer to individuals classified as Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India. The British government introduced the term 'Scheduled caste' in the Government of India Act 1935, replacing the previous term 'depressed classes'. Mahatma Gandhi referred to them as 'Harijan' meaning 'man of god'. The term 'Dalit' gained prominence through the Ambedkar movement, which aimed to raise political and social awareness among marginalised groups. B.R. Ambedkar argued that achieving social equality within the hierarchical structure of Hinduism was not possible, placing Dalits at the lowest rung. He encouraged Dalits to take charge of their own cause, promoting the principles of education, organisation and agitation.

Ambedkar's definition of Dalithood encompasses the life condition characterised by the exploitation, suppression and marginalisation of Dalit people due to the dominance of

◆ Ambedkar's perspective on Dalits

upper caste Brahminical ideology in social, economic, cultural and political spheres. Dalits are positioned at the lowest level in the hierarchical caste system of Hindu society and are commonly referred to as untouchables. Ambedkar strongly criticised the concept of caste, including its associated features such as occupation and hierarchy. He viewed caste not as a natural division but as a social category that perpetuate discrimination. Ambedkar believed that Dalits are the most oppressed group in Indian society, facing social, political and economic backwardness. They were considered as impure sections of society, with their touch and even their shadow believed to pollute the upper castes.

◆ Ambedkar's writings and Hinduism

Ambedkar's unpublished and draft writings directly addressed Hinduism, particularly during the latter half of the 1940's. He argued that Buddhism represented a significant social and ideological revolution, standing against the decay of Aryan society. Buddhism rejected the Varna system, offered hope to marginalised groups, and opposed superstitious practices, sacrifices and priestly authority. The Buddhist sangha served as a platform for empowering and uplifting the common people. However, Ambedkar contended that Brahmanism launched a counter revolution under pushyamitra. In explaining these historical events, Ambedkar employed specific European terminology and believed that this explanation was applicable to India despite the significant time gap.

b) Annihilation of Caste

◆ Subaltern perspective and caste system

Ambedkar pointed out that the Smriti and Shastras were not religious texts but rather sets of regulations designed to deprive untouchables of their basic needs and deny them equal status in society. He argued that such a religion should be abolished since it discriminates against its own people by labelling them as untouchables. Ambedkar's approach to empowering and liberating Dalits also involved developing a distinct concept of Indian nationalism that challenged the dominant discourse of Hindu nationalism represented by figures like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, BG. Tilak, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. His perspective on nationalism incorporated the aspirations and opinions of the oppressed merging the subaltern ideologies of Jyotirao Phule and Periyar E.V Ramaswamy Naicker. This alternative vision known as Dalit Bahujan Samaj, presented an anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmin narrative of Indian nationalism, seeking to establish a society free from caste and class-based



discrimination where one's birth and occupation do not determine their worth. Within this framework, Ambedkar denounced pre colonial Brahminism and its discriminatory social structure that categorised people into high and low castes, highlighting it allowed unproductive Brahminical castes to exploit productive castes. Ambedkar's subaltern perspective enabled him to see through the illusion of the caste-ridden Indian social system, which appeared falsely attractive, and provided a plan to safeguard the interests of Dalits.

◆ Evils in caste system

Ambedkar's understanding of caste and the caste system underwent significant evolution as evident in his writings. Initially, argued that endogamy, reinforced by exogamy within a shared cultural context, was the defining characteristic of caste. He attributed social evils like sati, child marriage and the prohibition of widow remarriage to the caste system, which he viewed as social consequence of one caste closing its boundaries and pressuring other castes to do the same. While he continued to emphasise endogamy as a fundamental aspect of caste, he later incorporated additional elements such as division of labour, absence of inter dining, and the principle of birth. Ambedkar also acknowledged the significance of caste names in perpetuating inequality within the caste system. He believed that the presence of graded inequality restricted equality only to members of a particular caste. Ultimately Ambedkar regarded caste as an integral part of the Hindu religion.

◆ Critique of caste system

The caste system remains deeply embedded in Hindu society, as it is supported by strong religious beliefs held by the majority of Hindus. Despite some reformers denouncing it, caste continues to exert a significant influence. Ambedkar observed that Gandhi initially embraced caste but later opposed it while still upholding varna, a system that assigns social status based on birth rather than merit, resulting in graded inequality and the denial of freedom and equality. According to Ambedkar, these values hinder the development of genuine community bonds. He proposed the complete eradication of caste, advocating for practices such as inter caste marriage and inter dining. However, he acknowledged that inter dining alone would not be sufficient to foster lasting bonds. Ambedkar also called for the removal of hereditary priesthood, advocating for its accessibility to all co -religionists based on qualifications certified by the state. Nevertheless, Ambedkar did not believe that these suggestions would be acceptable to Hindus, and after the

early 1930s, he abandoned hope for reforming Hinduism. Instead, he focused on the Hindu code bill, which continued his agenda from the 1920s.

◆ Understanding untouchability

Ambedkar's approach to untouchability reveals a more complex and emotional stance compared to his views on caste. He struggles to find words to express his grief and anger towards the institution of untouchability and questions how it could have been tolerated and defended. He remains skeptical of others motives in addressing the issue. Ambedkar differentiates between untouchability and caste, although he acknowledges that caste reinforces untouchability and both are opposed by Brahminism. He recognises the difficulty for outsiders to fully understand this phenomenon. While he believes that human sympathy will eventually alleviate the suffering of untouchables, he anticipates obstacles arising from deep – rooted prejudices, vested interests, religious beliefs, the weight of the social hierarchy, and the limited resources available to untouchable themselves. Ambedkar criticises the colonial administration for not doing enough to improve the condition of untouchables and assess the track records of Islam and Christianity, noting that while these religions reject untouchability, they have not been successful in eradicating it.

◆ Mistreatment from caste Hindus

Ambedkar believed that untouchables should take charge of their own fight for equality, with others providing support rather than dictating solutions. He discussed the deliberate efforts to deny the existence of untouchables and to diminish their population share in order to deprive them of adequate political representation. Drawing comparisons of slaves and jews, Ambedkar argued that untouchables faced even critical circumstances. Despite their differences, all untouchables shared common disadvantages and endured similar mistreatment from caste Hindus. They were segregated into ghettos, universally despised and excluded from mainstream society. Ambedkar offered a detailed account of the untouchable movement, focusing primarily on the movement in Bombay presidency. He criticised Gandhi's approach to tackling untouchability, considering it a superficial gesture aimed at appeasing untouchables rather than addressing the root cause of their oppression.

Ambedkar presented a wealth of empirical evidence to support his arguments and offered his own strategies to combat untouchability. He warned the people about the dangers of following Gandhism and instead encouraged



◆ Marginalisation of the untouchables

them to strive for political power. While acknowledging that untouchables, faced similar challenges among Christians and Muslims, he noted that these communities did not uphold untouchability as a religious principle. Ambedkar remained vigilant of attempts by others to exploit untouchables for political gains. He did not delve deeply into the historical origins of untouchability, dismissing the idea of it being based on race and rejecting the notion that caste had a racial foundation. At one point, he proposed a speculative thesis suggesting that untouchables were marginalised individuals who resisted giving up Buddhism and beef eating, leading to their branding as untouchables. He presented this thesis while advocating for the recognition of untouchables as a distinct community in India with constitutional protections, as the colonial administration and Gandhian leadership only acknowledged Muslims and Sikhs as distinct communities.

Summarised Overview

Like Ranajit Guha, David Hardiman is also one of the core members of the subaltern historiography movement in India. He focused mainly on the history of South Asia during the colonial period. In his works, he emphasises on the impact of colonial rule on the rural society and their assertions. His analysis of Indian nationalism and independence movement has given new insights in understanding the local power structure and nationalism. He examined the role of local peasants' activities and Adivasi (tribal) assertions during the colonial time especially in western India. He has used ethnographic and archival sources to analyse movements of western India to promote the subaltern studies in India. He has studied the Devi movement which took place in Gujarat during 1922-23. It was Adivasi tribal movement by tribal peasants against the moneylenders, landlords and liquor shop owners. Caste as a concept posed a great challenge to the academic world both due to its origin and implications. Caste is the base of Indian society and it continued to play a major role in all aspects of life: social, political, economic and cultural. It has influenced over all aspects of life. We cannot imagine caste without India. However, it has posed challenges to understand Indian society. It has become a living entity. Ambedkar's theory of caste had advanced our thinking of caste to have a nuanced understanding. It was a major academic turning point in the field of caste studies. Recently, his work received attention from scholars and students from across the world.

Assignments

1. What is the subaltern approach and how does it apply to the Devi movement in India? Discuss in detail with reference to David Hardiman's work.
2. How does the Devi movement challenge the traditional understanding of Indian society and politics? Analyse the ways in which the subaltern approach helps us understand this movement better.
3. What is the significance of the Devi movement in contemporary Indian politics? How does it reflect the subaltern approach and challenge dominant narratives about Indian society and politics?
4. In what ways has the Devi movement empowered women in India? How does this relate to the subaltern approach and the concept of resistance?
5. How has David Hardiman's work on the Devi movement contributed to our understanding of subaltern politics in India? What are the limitations of this approach and how might it be improved?
6. What were the key ideas and arguments presented by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in his essay "*Annihilation of Caste*"? How did he challenge the traditional caste system in India, and what solutions did he propose?
7. How does Ambedkar's concept of annihilation of caste differ from other approaches to caste reform in India? Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of his approach, and evaluate its impact on Indian society and politics.
8. What role did Ambedkar play in the Dalit movement in India, and how did his advocacy for the annihilation of caste contribute to this movement? Analyse the ways in which his ideas and leadership have shaped contemporary Dalit politics in India.
9. What is the significance of Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism and Brahminism in his essay "*Annihilation of Caste*"? How does he use historical and sociological evidence to support his arguments, and what implications do his ideas have for the study of religion and culture in India?
10. How does Ambedkar's vision of the annihilation of caste relate to broader debates about social justice and equality in India and globally? Analyse the ways in which his ideas resonate with other movements for social and political change, and assess their relevance for contemporary struggles for justice and liberation.



Suggested Readings

1. Ambedkar, B. R. (1917). *Caste in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* (Vol 41). New York: Indian Antiquary.
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3. Hardiman, D. (2008). *The Devi Movement in India: Strategies and Mobilisation for a Subaltern Counter-Public*. New Delhi: Routledge Publishers.
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5. Roy, S. (2016). *Feminist Praxis, Subaltern Consciousness and The Devi Movement in India*. Social Movement Studies, 15(6), 593-607. Taylor and Francis online.
6. Ambedkar, B. R. (1936). *Annihilation of Caste*. Mumbai: *Writing and Speeches of Babasaheb Ambedkar* (published in 1989), Maharashtra: Government of Maharashtra Publishing Enterprise.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Social Stratification in India

BLOCK-03



Caste in India

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the dynamics of caste mobilisation in India, including the factors that contribute to the mobilisation of different castes and the implications of caste-based political movements
- ◆ understand the dynamics of caste mobilisation and the implications of caste based political movements in India
- ◆ examine the significance of caste as a pressure group in the Indian political landscape.
- ◆ explore the various forms of caste -based inequalities and discrimination prevalent in Indian society
- ◆ assess the significance of caste as a pressure group in the Indian political landscape

Background

Imagine stepping into a vast land that pulsates with diversity, where ancient traditions seamlessly blend with modern dynamics. India, with its rich cultural tapestry and a population of over 1.4 billion people, is a treasure trove for sociologists seeking to unravel the complexities of society. At the core of Indian society lies the unique system of caste. Caste, a social hierarchy deeply woven into the fabric of Indian life, categorises individuals into distinct groups based on birth, occupation, and social status. One of the intriguing aspects of caste is the ability to mobilise people around shared caste identities. Caste mobilisation refers to the process of individuals and communities coming together based on their caste affiliations to assert their rights, address grievances, and demand social and political change. It involves collective action, often led by caste-based organisations and leaders, to advocate for the interests and welfare of specific castes or caste groups. In the realm of politics, caste has been a potent force that has shaped the Indian political landscape. The politicisation of caste refers to the involvement of caste identities and considerations in electoral politics, party



formations, and policy-making. Historically, political parties have recognised the significance of caste as a decisive factor in securing votes and capturing power. In addition to the political dimensions, caste embodies various forms of inequality and discrimination prevalent in Indian society. Exploring the intersections between caste and other social categories, such as gender, class, and religion, provides deeper insights into the multifaceted dynamics that shape Indian society. By studying caste mobilisation, politicisation of caste, and the role of caste as a pressure group, we could gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of Indian society, politics, and social movements. It allows for a nuanced analysis of caste-based inequalities, discrimination, and the potential avenues for social reform and equitable development in India.

Keywords

Mobilisation, Politicisation, Pressure group, Transformation, Indigenous studies

Discussion

3.1.1 Basics of Caste System in India

◆ Social division

Caste, a subject of extensive debate and analysis in India, holds a rich and fascinating history. The origins of the term 'caste' can be traced back to the Spanish word 'Casta,' which evokes notions of breeding and lineage. As European colonial powers arrived on the shores of India, they introduced the term 'caste' to categorise the intricate divisions within the Indian social structure. Interestingly, 'caste' also carries connotations of 'race' or 'kind,' infusing it with a broader meaning that extends beyond mere social divisions.

◆ Symbolic meaning

Delving deeper into the Sanskrit language, we encounter the word 'Varna,' which beautifully captures the essence of caste. 'Varna' translates to 'colour,' inviting us to explore the symbolic significance of races and hues within the intricate tapestry of the Indian caste system. Intriguingly, the Indian caste system not only encompasses the concept of race but also intertwines with the division of labour and occupation. It weaves together the complex strands of societal roles and responsibilities, assigning individuals to specific castes based on their hereditary occupation and their perceived place within the social hierarchy. By unraveling the interplay

between races, colours, divisions of labor, and occupational structures, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities that define caste in India.

◆ Stratification

The rich tapestry of Indian society is intricately woven with the threads of caste, known as 'Jati.' This captivating social construct finds the roots in the ancient 'Chaturvarna' system, a philosophical doctrine that shaped the stratification of Indian society. Let us embark on a vivid exploration of these concepts, illustrated with captivating imagery. Imagine a vibrant bazaar bustling with people, each belonging to a distinct jati, akin to a colorful thread in a grand tapestry. The caste system, represented by these jatis, weaves through the very fabric of Indian social life, dictating customs, traditions, and social interactions. At the core of this intricate tapestry lies the Chaturvarna system, which envisioned society divided into four primary varnas.

◆ Hierarchy

According to the Rig Veda, the oldest and most revered of the four Vedas, the social order in ancient India is classified into four Varnas, arranged in a hierarchical structure. These Varnas include the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, and the Shudras. The Brahmans, occupying the highest position in the hierarchy, are entrusted with the sacred duties of priests and teachers. They are the custodians of knowledge and spirituality, guiding society in matters of religion and philosophy.

◆ Livelihood and occupation

Next in line are the Kshatriyas, the valiant warriors and rulers. They bear the responsibility of safeguarding society, governing kingdoms, and upholding justice and order. The Kshatriyas are the defenders and protectors of the realm, embodying courage, honour, and chivalry. The Vaishyas, comprising traders and the common people, constitute the middle rung of the social order. Their livelihoods revolve around trade, commerce, agriculture, and various other vocations that support the economic well-being of society. The Vaishyas are the backbone of the economy, driving growth and prosperity. Occupying the lowest position in the hierarchy are the Shudras, who perform menial tasks and laborious chores. They fulfil essential roles such as agriculture, artisanry, and service-oriented occupations.

The Shudras contribute to the functioning of society through their dedicated work and dedication. In addition to these four Varnas, some historians suggest the existence of a fifth Varna known as the untouchables. Regrettably,



◆ Social space

these individuals have been historically marginalised and excluded from mainstream society, enduring social segregation and discrimination. It is important to note that the Varna system does not encompass all members of society. Tribes and individuals belonging to other religions were often positioned outside the Varna system, occupying their distinct social spaces and cultural practices.

◆ Fixed social status

Individuals are inherently assigned to a particular caste based on their birth, and this membership remains unalterable throughout their lives. The caste system, deeply ingrained in Indian society, operates on the premise that one's social status is fixed and immutable. Nevertheless, there have been instances where entire castes, propelled by economic advancements and evolving lifestyles, have aspired to ascend the social ladder, seeking higher recognition and acceptance in society.

◆ Preservation of hierarchy

However, the response to such claims from dominant castes can be contentious, with adverse reactions often emerging. Even in cases where recognition is granted, the fundamental structure of the caste system remains intact, preserving the hierarchical divisions. Nonetheless, certain transformative forces have influenced the rigidity of the caste system over time.

◆ Sanskritisation

The process of Sanskritisation, wherein lower castes imitate the practices and rituals of higher castes, along with inter-caste marriages and the spread of education, has played a significant role in reshaping the caste landscape. These dynamics have gradually eroded the stringent boundaries and constraints imposed by the caste system, fostering greater fluidity and social mobility. It is important to acknowledge that while the caste system experiences certain degrees of flexibility and adaptation, the pervasive influence continues to shape Indian society, impacting social interactions, opportunities, and perceptions of individual worth.

◆ Closed group

a) According to D.N Mazumdar and T N Madan – 'Caste is a closed class' i.e. Class refers to individuals' social positioning based on factors such as property, business, and occupation. Unlike the caste system, which is fixed and unchangeable, one has the potential to shift between different classes within the class system. It is possible to hold membership in multiple classes simultaneously. Caste

3.1.1.1 Definitions on Caste

affiliation, on the other hand, is determined at birth and remains unalterable throughout one's life. To maintain their caste status, individuals must adhere to prescribed rules and regulations, with violations often resulting in punishments or even expulsion from the caste.

- ◆ Caste is fixed, but class is not

Once a person ventures outside their caste, re-entry becomes impossible. In contrast, within the class system, one can aspire to change their position through dedicated efforts. For example, an individual from an illiterate class can acquire literacy and ascend to the educated class. While caste is hereditary and unchangeable, social mobility within the class system is achievable through personal growth and advancement.

- ◆ Social construct

b) According to Sir Herbert Risely: Caste is a "collection of families, bearing a common name, claiming a common descent, from a mythical ancestor, human and 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". This above definition considers caste as an enigmatic social construct, transcends the boundaries of a mere classification and weaves together a captivating tapestry of shared heritage, mythical lineage, and ancestral connections. It represents a harmonious amalgamation of families bearing a common name, tracing their origins to a revered mythical ancestor, simultaneously human and divine.

- ◆ Caste weaves a captivating tapestry

Rooted in the depths of tradition, caste embraces a profound belief in the pursuit of hereditary callings, wherein each caste forms a cohesive community devoted to a specific occupation passed down through generations. This intricate web of interconnectedness and devotion endows caste with a singular homogeneous essence, acknowledged by those astute enough to perceive the complexities. Caste, thus, stands as a testament to the profound richness of India's cultural tapestry, inviting introspection into the multifaceted nature of human existence and the enduring significance of shared identities.

c) According to Charles Cooley - "When a class is somewhat strictly hereditary, we may call it a caste." When societal divisions are characterised by a stringent hereditary structure, they transcend mere classes and evolve into what we identify as castes. Within these castes, social standing is intricately intertwined with one's birthright,

- ◆ Caste transcends mobility

with membership determined by ancestral ties and lineage. The notion of mobility, which often accompanies class systems, becomes constrained within the rigid boundaries of castes. The hereditary nature of castes reinforces a sense of permanence and unchangeability, firmly anchoring individuals to their designated social positions. Thus, when a social stratification exhibits such unfaltering hereditary traits, it can aptly be denoted as a caste, embodying a distinct and enduring socio-cultural construct.

3.1.1.2 Salient Features of Caste System in India

According to G.S. Ghurye, a renowned sociologist, the caste system in India can be characterised by six main features. These characteristics provide insights into the structure and dynamics of the caste system.

- ◆ Inheritance by birth

Hereditary Membership: At the core of the caste system lies the principle of hereditary membership, where one's caste affiliation is inherited from birth. This remarkable characteristic establishes an unyielding link between individuals and their caste, firmly rooting them within the social hierarchy from the moment they enter the world. Like an indelible mark passed down through generations, the caste position a person is born into becomes an integral part of their identity, shaping their social standing, opportunities, and interactions throughout their entire lifetime. This unbroken chain of hereditary affiliation perpetuates the stability and endurance of the caste system, forming an intricate tapestry of interconnected lineages that traverse time and generations, solidifying the bonds of kinship and perpetuating the social fabric of Indian society.

- ◆ Caste bond

Endogamy: The practice of endogamy weaves an enchanting thread that binds individuals to their own caste. Endogamy, the time-honored tradition of marrying within one's own caste, stands as a powerful pillar of the caste system, imparting a sense of exclusivity, loyalty, and cohesion to each caste group. It is a social custom that delicately balances the preservation of caste boundaries with the preservation of cultural heritage and lineage.

Through the centuries, the practice of endogamy has acted as a force that fortifies caste identities, ensuring that caste distinctions are not diluted by external influences or intermingling with other castes. It is a testament to the profound significance placed on caste solidarity,

◆ Cultural heritage

emphasising the unique bonds shared by individuals who bear the same caste label and participate in the rich tapestry of caste-specific customs, rituals, and traditions. Endogamy, like a guardian of caste purity, perpetuates the social order, reinforcing the intricate interplay between caste, kinship, and cultural preservation, while simultaneously shaping the destinies of generations to come.

◆ professionalisation

Occupational Specialisation: The caste system bestows upon individuals the sacred duty of carrying forward the torch of their ancestral trades, perpetuating a lineage of expertise that spans generations. From the enchanting rhythms of the tabla played by the skilled hands of the Dhobi caste to the intricate craftsmanship of the weavers in the Sali caste, the caste system intricately intertwines livelihoods with the rich tapestry of social order. It is a system where the occupation becomes an permanent part of one's identity, forging an unbreakable bond between the individual and the profession that defines their caste.

◆ Preservation of craftsmanship

This occupational specialisation, passed down through the annals of time, ensures the continuity and mastery of each caste's unique skills and knowledge, preserving the heritage and craftsmanship that have become hallmarks of their collective identity. Just as a symphony relies on the harmonious blend of diverse instruments, the caste system draws strength from the symphony of specialised occupations, enriching the cultural landscape and sustaining the intricate balance of society.

◆ Web of hierarchy

Hierarchy and Ranking: Within the caste system, a captivating landscape of hierarchy and ranking unfolds. Like a majestic mountain range with peaks that touch the sky, the caste system ascends with a structured order, with some castes basking in the lofty heights of social status and privileges, while others dwell in the valleys below. This intricate web of stratification is woven with threads of perceived purity and ritualistic significance, delicately intertwining notions of honor, prestige, and power.

◆ Structured hierarchy

Castes are meticulously positioned within this grand tapestry, each carrying a weighty label that shapes their place in the social fabric. From the exalted Brahmins, adorned with the divine mantle of spiritual wisdom, to the courageous Kshatriyas, entrusted with the guardianship of realms, and the enterprising Vaishyas, whose prosperity fuels the wheels of commerce, each caste occupies a distinct rung on the ladder



of societal hierarchy. The higher castes bask in the warmth of privileges and opportunities, while the lower castes navigate a path strewn with obstacles and limited access to resources.

◆ Enjoyable privileges

The caste system, with the structured hierarchy and ranking, weaves a tale of social stratification, reminding us of the complex interplay between status, power, and societal divisions. It stands as a poignant reflection of the human condition, challenging us to confront the disparities that exist within the fabric of our shared existence and seek a harmonious balance that transcends the constraints of caste.

◆ Ritual purity

Ritual Purity and Pollution: Like the ebb and flow of a sacred river, the concept of ritual purity courses through the veins of caste communities, bestowing sanctity upon some and drawing invisible boundaries around others. Within this ethereal realm, certain activities, occupations, or even mere contact with individuals or substances can cast shadows of impurity, threatening to taint the sanctity of higher castes.

◆ The concept of 'pollution'

The very fabric of caste society is woven with delicate threads of adherence to rituals and prescribed behaviors, where the avoidance of contamination becomes a way of life. It is a world where a misstep can disrupt the harmony of social order, where the touch of a “polluting” entity can send ripples of concern and unrest. The notion of purity and pollution becomes a guiding force, dictating the norms of behavior, the boundaries of interaction, and the preservation of social hierarchies.

◆ Interplay of 'purity' and 'pollution'

Within caste communities, these concepts become ingrained, shaping the rituals, practices, and traditions that form the cultural bedrock of society. From the careful segregation of spaces to the meticulous observance of rituals, the dance of purity and pollution orchestrates the rhythms of daily life. It is a delicate balance, where adherence to prescribed rules brings solace and harmony, while transgressions invite censure and unrest. The interplay between ritual purity and pollution paints a vivid portrait of a society deeply rooted in the beliefs and traditions, where the quest for purity becomes a pathway to spiritual enlightenment and social acceptance. As we gaze upon this intricate tableau, we are reminded of the profound impact that notions of purity and pollution have on the human experience, shaping our perceptions, interactions, and the tapestry of our shared existence.

- ◆ Unspoken social rules

Social Segregation: In the caste system, different castes reside in separate areas, creating distinct communities. They follow unspoken rules of social hierarchy, maintaining appropriate social distance. There is a clear barrier that divides these communities, limiting social interaction and shaping daily life. Streets and neighborhoods are marked with social boundaries, where mingling between castes is rare. Busy marketplaces resonate with whispered caste affiliations, reminding everyone of their place in society. This segregation reflects limited interaction between castes, governed by invisible walls. It is a realm where social harmony balances with preserving caste identities, and mingling across caste lines is uncommon.

- ◆ Restriction of human interactions

However, within these separate spheres, communities flourish, fostering a sense of belonging and shared traditions. This landscape highlights the impact of social segregation, where proximity and distance influence human relationships, and the desire for connection clashes with preserving caste-based identities. The caste system leaves a lasting imprint on society and the intricate tapestry of human existence.

The English word “caste” can refer to either varna or jati. Jati represents an actual social group in which people identify themselves and form the basis for their interactions. The caste system in India embodies the principle of inequality. There are four varnas: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. The unique nature of the Indian caste structure is the hierarchical order. Each caste is stratified and traditionally associated with specific occupations. Caste mobilisation refers to the act of organising and preparing for collective action, such as caste organisations. The Politicisation of caste influences politics, and the political system, in turn, influences caste. They are interconnected. Pressure groups strive to safeguard and promote the interests of their members.

3.1.1.3 Changing Nature of Caste System in India

- ◆ Significant influence

The caste system in India has undergone significant changes over time, reflecting the evolving social, economic, and political landscape of the country. While the caste system has deep historical roots and continues to exert a significant influence on Indian society, several factors have contributed to its changing nature. Changes in the caste system entail



three types of changes such as structural change, functional change and attitudinal change.

a) Structural Changes

- ◆ Decline in the supremacy of the Brahmins

(i) Over the course of time, the once towering dominance of the Brahmins, the highest caste in the social hierarchy, has witnessed a remarkable decline, marking a significant shift in the dynamics of the caste system. In yesteryears, the Brahmins held an unparalleled position, revered for their scholarly wisdom and spiritual authority, occupying the apex of societal power. However, propelled by the winds of modernisation and the evolving contours of Indian society, the grip of Brahminical supremacy has gradually receded into the depths of history's canvas. No longer do they bask in the same radiance of social status that once adorned their illustrious heritage, as the tides of change have reshaped the very foundations of their influence.

- ◆ Erosion of caste boundaries

(ii) The once firmly entrenched caste system, characterised by the well-defined hierarchical structure, has undergone a profound transformation, rendering its boundaries blurred and the rigid divisions less discernible. Several factors have contributed to this shift, including the diversification of occupations, the migration of people to urban areas, and the mechanisation of agriculture. These forces of change have eroded the once sharp lines that separated caste groups, giving way to a landscape where intermingling and interpenetration among different groups, classes, and categories are increasingly prevalent.

- ◆ Social dynamics

As this intricate interplay unfolds, a gradual divergence between caste, class, and power becomes evident, signaling a subtle but significant departure from the traditional congruence that once dictated societal order. The tapestry of the caste system, once characterised by clear delineations, now reflects a more fluid and complex interplay of social dynamics, where the boundaries between caste groups are challenged, and new patterns of interaction and interdependence emerge.

- ◆ Shift in social status

(iii) The transformative governmental policy of protective discrimination has traversed a remarkable path in elevating the socio-economic conditions of the marginalised community of Harijans. As a result, their social status has experienced a substantial upswing, signifying a remarkable shift in their standing within society. The concerted efforts to rectify historical injustices through affirmative action have yielded

- ◆ Protection of the Harijans

tangible outcomes, empowering the Harijans and paving the way for their enhanced inclusion and participation in various spheres of life. This progressive approach, underpinned by the principles of equity and justice, has fostered an environment where the barriers that once confined the Harijans to the periphery of society are dismantled, enabling them to assert their rightful place in the social fabric. The winds of change, propelled by these forward-looking policies, have breathed new life into the aspirations and aspirations of the Harijans, ushering in a wave of hope and a palpable sense of progress.

b) Functional Changes

- ◆ Paradigm shift

(i) In a caste society, birth was traditionally regarded as the exclusive foundation of social status. However, within the ever-evolving social landscape, birth no longer holds sway over the realm of social prestige. The changing tides of the social fabric have ushered in a new paradigm where criteria such as wealth, ability, education, and efficiency have emerged as the pivotal determinants of social status.

- ◆ Dilution of rigid boundaries

The once-revered significance of caste as an arbiter of status has been gracefully relegated to the background, making way for a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of societal hierarchy. The winds of transformation have blown away the rigid boundaries of birth-based privilege, allowing the transformative power of meritocracy and individual achievement to shape the contours of social recognition.

- ◆ Change in the fixation of status

Within this shifting tapestry of societal values, the timeless virtues of talent, hard work, and intellectual prowess now hold greater currency, transcending the confines of inherited status. It is in this progressive era that the significance of one's caste has been diminished, as society embraces a more egalitarian vision that celebrates individual worth and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to the collective progress of humankind.

- ◆ Change with regard to occupation

(ii) Regarding the caste system, individuals were historically bound to the occupation ascribed to them by their caste, leaving them with no choice. However, in the contemporary context, occupation is no longer a hereditary monopoly confined to specific castes. Individuals now have the freedom to pursue any occupation of their liking based on their abilities and interests. The movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, advocating the dignity of labor, has encouraged higher castes to embrace occupations traditionally considered menial or involving physical labor. Simultaneously, education



has paved the way for members of lower castes to access white-collar occupations. This shift signifies a departure from the rigid occupational boundaries imposed by the caste system, allowing individuals.

◆ Social Laws

(iii) Under the caste system, endogamy served as the foundation for mate selection. A strict social law prohibited members of a caste or sub-caste from marrying outside their own group. However, the Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 have abolished endogamic restrictions, recognising inter-caste marriages as legally valid.

◆ Changes in marriage restrictions

In recent times, various factors including the influence of Western philosophy, the advent of coeducation, and the collaboration of individuals from different castes in workplaces such as factories and offices have contributed to a rise in inter-caste marriages, love marriages, and delayed marriages. These developments reflect a shifting societal landscape, where individuals are increasingly embracing the freedom to choose their life partners based on compatibility, love, and personal preferences, transcending the boundaries imposed by the caste system.

◆ Change in commensality

(iv) In the traditional system, the unit of commensality was defined fairly rigidly in terms of caste affiliation. However, in recent times, there has been a gradual expansion of this unit. Today, Brahmins are engaging in inter-dining with “clean” Shudras, and they readily partake in food from other castes considered clean. For the fulfillment of their political objectives, they do not hesitate to accept food and water from members of lower castes. These changes in commensality practices reflect a shifting social dynamic, where caste barriers are being eroded and individuals are increasingly willing to share meals and accept offerings across caste lines.

◆ Ritual purity

(v) Kapadia stated that the Hindu concept of purity and pollution was very extensive in its scope and mandatory in observance until the 1920s. Under the caste system, occupations were ranked according to their ritual purity. For example, coming into contact with a barber was believed to cause impurity, and items such as meat, fish, and wine were considered ritually impure. Menstruating women were also considered impure, and the food they cooked was seen as impure. However, in the 21st century, the significance of these ideas of purity and pollution in Hindu social life has

significantly diminished. Religious sanction no longer serves as the basis for determining what is pure and impure. Instead, hygiene practices have become the criterion for purity and impurity in the present day.

- ◆ Change in the life style

(vi) In the past, every caste had its own lifestyle. These differences in lifestyles made people from different castes appear distinct from one another. However, today these differences between caste lifestyles are gradually being eliminated, and there is a noticeable tendency towards the development of a common style. This standardisation of lifestyles is a result of the dual processes of Sanskritisation and Westernisation.
- ◆ Change in inter-caste relations

(vii) Of late, the pattern of inter-caste relations has undergone profound changes. The mutual rights and obligations that used to characterise inter-caste relations have crumbled. Members of low castes no longer obey the orders of high-caste members, and they refuse to perform forced labor for the upper castes. The efforts made by lower castes to improve their social status have caused annoyance among the upper castes. All these factors have led to inter-caste conflicts, which are gradually increasing. However, these conflicts are more driven by the pursuit of power rather than based on ritual status.
- ◆ Change in the power of caste Panchayats

(viii) So far as the caste system is concerned, each caste had a caste Panchayat. The caste Panchayat played the role of a judicial body. But today, Jati Panchayats are on the decline. Law courts and village factions have taken over most of their roles.
- ◆ No restrictions on education

(ix) Today, education is no longer confined to the higher castes. Anybody belonging to any caste can pursue studies in educational institutions. Of late, the government, both at the Union and State levels, has adopted several measures for the spread of education among the lower castes, such as providing them with stipends, scholarships, free study materials, and reservation of seats.
- ◆ Changes in the system of power

(x) The notions of democracy and adult franchise have affected the caste system in several ways. The new political system undermines the fundamental basis of hierarchy. In the past, politics was considered the exclusive domain of the higher castes. However, today people from all castes are becoming aware that they can play a significant role in the political processes and benefit from them.

- ◆ Caste consciousness

(xi) The surge in caste consciousness and the rise of casteism have exerted a profound influence on political landscapes, shaping the discourse around critical issues and influencing the trajectory of political decisions. The resurgence of caste-based identities has redefined the contours of political engagement, as individuals and communities increasingly rally around caste affiliations to assert their interests and secure representation.

- ◆ Caste and power dynamics

The pervasive nature of caste consciousness has permeated various facets of politics, from electoral dynamics and party alignments to policy formulation and resource allocation. As caste considerations intersect with political aspirations, the complex interplay between caste and power dynamics unfolds, reconfiguring the social fabric and challenging notions of equity and inclusivity in governance.

- ◆ Weakening of the Jajmani system

(xii) The Jajmani system in the villages has weakened, impacting inter-caste relations. Several reasons, such as laxity in performing rites and rituals by members of different castes, the decline of Brahminical supremacy, advancements in transportation and communication, and intergenerational educational mobility, can be attributed to the decline of the Jajmani system in rural India.

3.1.2 Caste Mobilisation in India

- ◆ Freedom and Equality

Caste and the democratic political system signify opposite value systems. Caste is hierarchical, wherein an individual's social status is determined by birth, while the democratic political system promotes individual freedom and equality of status, emphasising that no one is above the rule of law. With the introduction of democratic institutions as per the Indian Constitution, Indian society has undergone significant changes, which have been reflected in the transformation of politics. Rajni Kothari, in "Caste in Indian Politics," argues that Politicisation of caste has occurred in India, resulting in a transformative relationship between caste and politics.

- ◆ Mobilisation of castes with power and employment

As a consequence, the secularisation of caste has taken place, indicating that caste's role extends beyond the traditional boundaries defined by principles of purity and impurity. This evolution facilitates the mobilisation of castes for secular purposes, including the pursuit of power and employment. The secularisation of caste has played a pivotal role in fostering the formation of inter-caste alliances and coalitions.

- ◆ Mobilisation

“Mobilisation” refers to the process of preparing groups for collective action, wherein people come together to pursue shared interests, such as organising demonstrations in support of a cause. “Caste” encompasses a comprehensive hierarchical institutional arrangement that determines social aspects like birth, marriage, and food-sharing, organised in a ranking system based on rank and status.
- ◆ Governing social relations

These subdivisions traditionally correspond to specific occupations and govern social relations between upper and lower castes. The traditional hierarchical structure of castes was rooted in the distinction between purity and pollution. While the outward manifestation of this order has undergone significant changes in recent times, the fundamental system itself has remained largely unchanged.
- ◆ Caste consciousness

Caste values and caste interests influence individuals’ political thinking, awareness, and participation, leading to the emergence of caste consciousness among the people. Political parties, when nominating candidates from different constituencies, consider both the caste of the candidates and the caste of the voters in that particular constituency, which, in turn, affects democratic principles of equality and justice. Sometimes, this dynamic leads to an unhealthy power struggle and acts as a divisive force.
- ◆ Caste based mobilisation

However, the prevalence of caste politics has also resulted in the welfare and development of marginalised sections of society. While caste politics in India has contributed to modernising political attitudes to some extent, it should not be seen as the sole means to achieve the welfare of marginalised and disadvantaged sections. Caste-based mobilisation remains a crucial tool for voter mobilisation for all political parties in India today, with many parties having a direct or indirect caste base. Caste plays a significant role in democratic politics, as caste identity and solidarity are important factors in the mobilisation of the Indian political system.
- ◆ Socio-economic inequalities

Nature of society is well understood by its social structure. The present caste system describes socio economic inequalities in the Indian society. Caste is also associated with an occupation having a local group people. Caste is identifiable as the social cluster of people. Politics of Maharashtra is mostly influenced by three castes Brahmins, Marathas and the Maharas. Andhra Pradesh politics is mainly depending upon Reddy and Kamma caste. Okkalige and

Lingayat caste have importance in the states of Karnataka. Bihar state mainly consists of caste as Bhumihar, Kayasta and Rajput. In Orissa most of the population is of Karans and Khandayats people. Political influence is intermingled through caste only.

◆ Caste in political leadership

In making the political leadership caste structure is considered. Public services can be accessed by the influence of the caste only. In Indian politics caste values and caste interest has its own significance in monitoring political thinking, awareness and participation. Some political parties use its veto power to attract particular caste group people and some regional parties discussing their issues by means of a caste. In most of the states in India in electoral processing votes are secured on the basis of caste.

◆ Promotion of political stability

Caste is given importance in the selection of electoral candidates, and its significance extends to the decision-making process. The ruling party can win the favor of major caste groups through its decision-making power. The role of caste in local self-government, such as Panchayati Raj and Gram Panchayat, is a recognised reality. Caste-based violence sometimes significantly impacts social and political life, while caste-based leadership is emerging in the Indian political system. Caste plays an essential role in giving momentum to the political process and promoting political stability among different caste groups, as acknowledged by experts Lloyd I, Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph.

◆ State policies

Caste plays a crucial role in politics, as evidenced by various studies on the relationship between caste and politics in India. Political parties and caste organisations mobilise different castes to address their specific concerns. Since Independence, Indian society has witnessed significant transformations that have had an impact on the nature of caste and politics. Caste's role has expanded beyond traditional occupation-based functions to influence the democratic landscape. These changes have been brought about by state policies such as land reforms, welfare schemes, reservation in public institutions for marginalised communities, and infrastructural development.

Over the years, the presence of Dalits and OBCs has become significant in Indian politics, marking a departure from the initial years of Independence when high castes and dominant middle castes held sway in the political landscape. There exists a symbiotic relationship between caste and

3.1.3 Politicisation of Caste

- ◆ Caste shapes politics

politics, where not only does politics influence caste, but caste also influences politics in return, highlighting the importance of caste in political dynamics, evident in the identification of certain political parties with specific castes in several states of the country.

3.1.3.1 Caste and Politics in Pre-independence India

- ◆ Distribution of power

Caste exerted a significant influence on the political landscape of pre-Independent India, shaping power dynamics, social hierarchies, and political representation. The caste system, deeply entrenched in Indian society, played a pivotal role in determining the distribution of power. The higher castes, such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas, traditionally held positions of authority and privilege, leading to their dominance in politics.

- ◆ Electoral outcomes and policies

During this period, caste-based political mobilisation gained momentum as various caste communities recognised the need for representation and organised themselves to assert their interests. Emerging leaders from different castes championed social and political reforms, working towards the upliftment and empowerment of their communities. Caste considerations became integral to political alliances, with parties aligning themselves with specific castes to secure support and consolidate their political base. Caste-based voting patterns and alliances became prominent features, influencing electoral outcomes and policy decisions.

- ◆ Reform movements

Simultaneously, there were reform movements led by figures like Jyotirao Phule, Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, and B. R. Ambedkar, who challenged caste-based discrimination and advocated for social justice and equality. They sought to dismantle oppressive caste structures and fight for the rights of marginalised castes. Religion and caste were closely intertwined, with religious institutions and leaders wielding influence over their respective caste communities.

- ◆ Addressing injustice

Policy-making processes were also influenced by caste considerations, as leaders and administrators had to navigate the complexities of caste-based interests. Reservation policies and affirmative action measures were introduced to address historical injustices and provide opportunities for marginalised castes.

British authorities played a significant role in shaping the caste dynamics in pre-Independence India through a series of interventions that had far-reaching consequences:



◆ Resistance to Brahminical dominance



1. The British administration sought the counsel of Brahmins, elevating their status and giving them preferential treatment. However, this move sparked resentment and fueled anti-Brahmin movements in regions like South India and Maharashtra. These movements aimed to challenge Brahminical dominance and advocated for social reforms. Additionally, caste associations such as the Ahir Yadav Mahasabha emerged as platforms for marginalised castes to resist Brahmin domination and assert their own interests.

◆ Acknowledgement of Rights



2. The Morley Minto Reform of 1909 introduced a separate electorate for the depressed classes, which aimed to provide political representation and address the social and economic grievances of marginalised communities. This reform recognised the importance of separate electorates based on caste, allowing for the representation of historically disadvantaged groups in legislative bodies. It was a significant step towards acknowledging the rights and aspirations of the depressed classes in the political sphere.

◆ Enlightenment



3. The British Government's missionary education system aimed to educate individuals from different castes about their rights and foster a sense of empowerment. Through this system, marginalised communities were exposed to modern education and enlightened about their entitlements and the principles of equality. This education system had a transformative impact, as it enabled individuals to challenge traditional hierarchies and assert their demands for social justice.

◆ Reshaping caste order



These interventions by the British authorities, while complex and often contentious, played a crucial role in reshaping the caste order in pre-Independence India. They fueled resistance against Brahminical dominance, facilitated political representation for marginalised communities, and empowered individuals through education. The repercussions of these interventions continue to shape the social, political, and cultural landscape of India even today.

3.1.3.2 Caste and Politics in the Post-Independence India

◆ Political dynamics

Caste and Politics in Post-Independence India is a significant topic that explores the relationship between caste-based social structures and political dynamics in the country. After India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947, the nation embarked on a journey to address caste-based discrimination and promote social justice. Caste, a deeply ingrained social institution, categorises individuals into hierarchical groups based on their birth.

◆ Electoral impact

In post-independence India, caste has continued to play a prominent role in shaping political processes and outcomes. Caste mobilisation refers to the organised efforts by caste-based associations and organisations to assert their interests in politics. People often vote based on their caste identity, which influences electoral results. Caste-based political parties have emerged, advocating for specific castes and their issues in the political arena.

◆ Caste based alliances

Caste politics in post-independence India has witnessed significant developments. Caste leaders and activists have played a crucial role in shaping political discourse by raising awareness about the concerns of marginalised castes. Caste-based alliances have become crucial for electoral success, with political parties aligning themselves with specific castes to secure support and consolidate their vote banks. The issue of caste and political representation has also been a central focus.

◆ Effectiveness of policies

The Indian Constitution introduced reservation policies to address historical injustices faced by marginalised castes. These policies provide reserved seats and quotas in educational institutions and government jobs to ensure representation and empower disadvantaged castes. However, discussions and debates continue regarding the effectiveness of these policies in achieving equitable representation and social justice. Caste considerations also influence policy-making processes in post-independence India. Various welfare schemes, land reforms, and development programs have been implemented to uplift marginalised caste communities and reduce social and economic disparities.

However, policymakers face the challenge of balancing caste-based interests with broader developmental goals, ensuring that policies are inclusive and benefit all sections of society. Caste-based social movements have emerged

- ◆ Caste based social movements

as powerful forces advocating for social justice and equal rights. Visionary leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar have spearheaded movements against caste-based discrimination and inequality. These social movements have influenced political ideologies and policies, highlighting the need for inclusive governance and social reforms.

- ◆ Social opportunities

Contemporary challenges exist in understanding the intersections of caste with gender and class, which present additional barriers to social mobility. Debates continue around finding a balance between caste-based reservations and meritocracy, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to all individuals irrespective of their caste background.

- ◆ Views of Ambedkar
- ◆ Reservation v/s Meritocracy

Sociologists and scholars continue to study caste and politics to gain insights into caste-based inequalities and work towards building a more equitable and inclusive society. Nehru believed that political democracy and caste cannot exist together. Similarly, Ambedkar argued “you can’t build anything on the foundation of Caste”. Caste as expected didn’t disappear. Political Parties use the category of caste for the mobilisation. Kothari Writes, that politicisation of caste, bring both caste and politics nearer and their interaction changes their forms. When politics draws the caste system into the web of its organisation, it finds material for its articulation, and when caste makes politics its sphere of activity, caste gets a chance to assert its identity and to strive for position. The relationship between caste and politics is basically a relationship for the specific purpose of organising public activity.

3.1.3.3 Role of Caste in Politics

- ◆ Mechanism of convergence

Caste is gradually assuming new forms and functions, expanding its influence beyond traditional roles, particularly in public life and politics. In contemporary India, caste plays a significant role in political affairs, prompting an exploration of the reasons and mechanisms behind the convergence of these two institutions. The fundamental cause lies in the fact that both caste and politics are deeply rooted in social life.

- ◆ Institutional framework

Political relationships inherently stem from social relationships, as politics serves as a means to seek and achieve social and economic dominance. The political and administrative structures of a nation are essentially reflections of the social system and relationships prevailing at a given time. In a society where caste holds a pervasive presence in interpersonal patterns and institutional frameworks, it is

inevitable for politics to intertwine with caste. The nature of political democracy has further facilitated the proximity of caste and politics.

Politics operates as a competitive pursuit, aiming to acquire power for the realisation of specific objectives. Its processes involve identifying and manipulating existing loyalties to mobilise and consolidate positions. Therefore, at the core of politics lies the organisation and mobilisation of masses around particular issues, leaders, and political parties. In this context, caste serves as a highly effective technique for group mobilisation, given its long-standing divisionary impact on society. Politicians find caste to be a well-developed and adaptable foundation for organisational purposes.

- ◆ Technique for group mobilisation

3.1.3.4 Caste and Electoral Politics

Caste holds significant influence in Indian politics, with the emergence of caste-based organisations and increased awareness of caste affiliations transforming the political landscape. Universal adult franchise paved the way for the mobilisation of different castes, making caste a crucial factor in political mobilisation.

- ◆ Awareness of caste affiliations

Caste's role in electoral politics encompasses two aspects: the caste profiles of elected representatives and the support bases of castes for political parties. The first aspect reflects the inclusion of castes in parties and legislative bodies, while the second aspect determines electoral success and sheds light on the importance of caste alongside issues like employment, health, education, and governance in politics.

- ◆ Electoral politics

In light of these aspects, caste has played a significant role in shaping political strategies to gather support from different caste groups. While various factors influence voters' decisions to support political parties, caste is also one of them. Certain castes or groups of castes form the support base for specific parties. For instance, the BSP has a substantial support base among Dalits. In the past, the Congress party relied heavily on Dalits, backward classes, and high castes as its support base in northern India, often referred to as a "coalition of castes" by Paul R. Brass.

- ◆ Support political parties

Parties consider the caste composition of a constituency and allocate tickets to candidates based on caste considerations. Voters also frequently take into account the caste of candidates when casting their votes in elections. Yogendra Yadav observes shift in changing participation of



- ◆ Change in electoral participation

different social groups in terms of democratic upsurge. He divides this upsurge into two phases: The first democratic upsurge indicated the rise of backward classes during the 1960s-1970s, and the second democratic upsurge shows the increasing participation of Dalits. This has been due to the effective role played by the caste organisations. In this context, Rajni Kothari underscores that the alleged 'casteism in politics' is thus no more or no less than Politicisation of caste. In other words, it is not politics that gets impacted by caste, it is caste that gets politicised.

3.1.3.5 Caste and Non-Electoral Politics

- ◆ Non-electoral forms of politics

Caste, as a social institution deeply rooted in Indian society, holds a significant influence over various aspects of public life, including politics. While the role of caste in electoral politics is well recognised, it is essential to understand that caste also plays a crucial role in non-electoral forms of politics. Non-electoral politics refers to activities and movements that aim to address social, economic, and cultural issues outside the realm of electoral processes. In this context, we will explore the relationship between caste and non-electoral politics in India.

- ◆ Advocating social justice

One important aspect of non-electoral politics is the presence of caste-based social movements. These movements have emerged throughout history to challenge the deeply ingrained caste-based discrimination and advocate for the rights of marginalised castes. Leaders like Jyotirao Phule, B.R. Ambedkar, and Periyar E.V. Ramasamy spearheaded movements to fight against caste oppression and work towards the upliftment of lower castes. These movements aimed to create social awareness, challenge discriminatory practices, and promote social justice.

- ◆ Caste organisations and solidarity

Another dimension of non-electoral politics is the formation of caste associations and organisations. These entities serve as platforms for caste-based mobilisation, advocacy, and representation. Caste associations work towards addressing the social, economic, and educational needs of their respective caste groups and strive for the empowerment of their members. These organisations play a crucial role in raising caste-specific issues, promoting solidarity among caste communities, and influencing public discourse on caste-related matters.

Caste also influences non-electoral politics through cultural and artistic expressions. Literature, music, theater,

- ◆ Artistic platforms

and other forms of cultural expressions often reflect the social realities and struggles of different caste communities. Artists and writers use their creative platforms to challenge caste hierarchies, promote social equality, and create awareness about caste-based injustices. Cultural expressions serve as powerful tools in mobilising support, shaping public opinion, and fostering a sense of identity and belonging among caste communities.
- ◆ Caste based identity politics

Identity politics based on caste is another important facet of non-electoral politics. Caste identity plays a significant role in shaping social movements, protests, and activism. People mobilise around their caste identities to advocate for their rights, challenge discrimination, and seek social inclusion. Caste-based identity politics focuses on demanding recognition, representation, and equal opportunities for marginalised castes within various spheres of society.
- ◆ Policy making processes

Non-electoral politics also encompasses policy advocacy and reforms related to caste-based issues. Activists and organisations work towards influencing policy-making processes to address caste-based inequalities, promote affirmative action, and ensure social justice. They advocate for the implementation of reservation policies, equal opportunities, and inclusive development for marginalised castes. These efforts aim to bring about structural changes that can dismantle the barriers created by the caste system and create a more equitable society.
- ◆ Critical factors

Voting serves as a recurring occasion for individuals, castes, and various groups to engage in the political process, and although it may be perceived as a basic form of political participation, its significance should not be underestimated. As noted by Lindzey Gardener, there are several critical factors that influence an individual's voting behavior, including campaigning efforts, salient issues during elections (such as inflation and corruption), party loyalty, the impact of mass media, primary group affiliations, the social background of voters (including education, gender, age, religion, and class), as well as individual personality variables (such as intelligence and values).
- ◆ Decision making process

These factors intertwine to shape the decision-making process of voters, reflecting the multifaceted nature of their political choices and preferences. It is through the act of voting that citizens exercise their democratic rights and contribute

3.1.3.6 Effect of Caste on Voting Behavior



to shaping the direction of governance, policy priorities, and societal values.

◆ Key determinants

Miller (1950), Key (1955), and Campbell (1960) have extensively studied the factors that influence an individual's voting behavior, identifying four key determinants: a) Demographic predictors, encompassing variables such as religion, caste, social class, and place of residence, which shape the socio-cultural context in which voting occurs. b) Party identification, ranging from strong to weak or even absent, which reflects an individual's allegiance and attachment to a particular political party. c) Issue orientation, referring to the prioritisation and alignment of voters' concerns with specific policy issues and ideological positions. d) Candidate's orientation, representing the voter's evaluation and perception of candidates based on their qualities, values, and positions on relevant issues.

◆ Individual-social factors

In a similar way, Norman Palmer (1976) focused on four determinants of voting behavior: a) Environmental factors, which encompass the broader social and political context within which voting takes place. b) Political factors, including candidate attributes, issue positions, and party identification, which shape voter preferences and choices. c) Social factors, such as familial ties, kinship networks, caste affiliations, and community dynamics, which influence voting patterns. d) Factionalism, referring to internal divisions, disagreements, and conflicts between different parties or factions within the political landscape. These comprehensive frameworks shed light on the multifaceted nature of voting behavior, highlighting the interplay between individual characteristics, social context, political dynamics, and ideological considerations.

◆ Pressure exertion on administration

3.1.4 Caste as a Pressure Group

A pressure group is an organised association of individuals aiming to influence government policies and actions or shape public opinion. Unlike political parties, pressure groups do not seek to attain government positions, although some organisations that begin as pressure groups may eventually transform into political parties. Pressure groups have emerged as crucial components of administrative systems, exerting pressure on the political and administrative machinery to promote their interests or prevent their relegation to the background.

◆ Pressure to gain advantages

Taking their views into consideration is essential for the effective functioning of any system. For example, trade unions, Dalit Sangharsha Samithis, Kisan Sabhas, minority groups, etc., function as pressure groups, playing a more significant role in democracies than in totalitarian states. In democratic systems, pressure groups become particularly noticeable during elections, influencing various stages of the electoral process such as candidate nominations, campaigning, party financing, and more, exerting significant pressure to gain advantages for their respective sides. Despite their limitations and flaws, they have become an integral part of the modern democratic process.

◆ Interest groups

In developing countries like India, where resources are scarce and poverty and deprivation are prevalent, the pressure on the administrative system is particularly intense. Pressure groups take various forms in different spheres of life, serving as stabilising mechanisms and contributing to the overall equilibrium of the system. It is important to distinguish between interest groups and pressure groups. Interest groups may exist without exerting pressure on the government or decision-makers. Only when an interest group actively presses and influences authorities to achieve its objectives is it considered a pressure group. While all pressure groups are interest groups, not all interest groups qualify as pressure groups.

a) Functions of pressure groups

The pressure group has the following functions:

◆ Essential part-democratic function

- They are a part of the administrative system.
- They have an impact on legislation.
- They play a crucial part in the democratic process.
- They make demand and need visible to policymakers and decision-makers.
- They are also involved in the administration of justice.
- Helpful in breaking the cycle of societal stagnation.

In the democratic functioning of a polity, pressure groups play a vital role. They seek to promote, discuss, debate and mobilise public opinion on major public issues. In this process, they educate people and widen their vision, enhance their democratic participation and raise and articulate various issues. These groups try to bring changes in public policy.



b) Techniques of pressure groups

◆ Change of attitudes

The main techniques of pressure groups are manipulating public opinion and persuading legislators and administrators. Pressure groups aim to change public attitudes towards specific issues, and their influence on the government depends on their ability to represent public opinion and shape the process of affirming it. Consequently, pressure groups are involved in manipulating public opinion. They also exert influence through legislators by advocating for specific provisions or the removal of certain provisions in legislation. Pressure groups often find support in legislatures, such as the American Congress and the Indian Parliament.

◆ Effectively mobilise the public

Additionally, pressure groups seek to influence the implementation of decisions through administrators. They may also resort to public interest litigation in courts to influence the government. In India, pressure groups have influenced the judiciary through public interest litigation, particularly in the areas of environmental and economic concerns, as seen in the case of Medha Patkar and the Narmada dam issue. Pressure groups focused on the rights of daily wage workers and women have also brought their cases before the courts through public interest litigation. Even at the municipal level, such as in Bombay, citizens take cases to the High Courts to exert pressure on municipal authorities for actions like street cleaning and environmental measures. These techniques are relatively new in the Indian context and other developing countries, requiring pressure groups to mobilise and organise the public effectively to have an impact on government and public administration.

Summarised Overview

The caste system in India is a deeply rooted social hierarchy that has shaped the country's society for centuries. It is characterised by a complex system of social stratification, where individuals are born into specific castes that determine their social status, occupation, and privileges. Caste is inherited and influences all aspects of life, including marriage, social interactions, and economic opportunities. Despite changes brought about by modernisation and globalisation, caste still plays a significant role in Indian society. Caste can be defined as a hereditary social group with distinct characteristics such as occupation, ritual purity, and social status. It is often associated with the concept of jati, which refers to specific subgroups within castes. The caste system is characterised by caste-based endogamy, where individuals marry within their own caste, and a hierarchical ranking of castes. Each caste has its own customs, rituals, and traditions, which contribute to the maintenance of social boundaries and identities.

Caste mobilisation has emerged as a significant force in Indian society. Various castes and communities have organised political and social movements to assert their rights, challenge discrimination, and demand social justice. Leaders like B.R. Ambedkar have spearheaded movements for Dalit rights, while Other Backward Classes (OBCs) have advocated for reservation benefits. These movements aim to uplift marginalised castes and seek political representation, challenging the traditional power dynamics of the caste system. In Indian politics, caste plays a crucial role. Political parties strategically mobilise voters based on caste considerations to secure electoral gains. Caste-based voting patterns significantly influence electoral outcomes, and parties form alliances and coalitions based on caste affiliations. Caste identity and mobilisation shape party strategies, candidate selection, and policy-making. Caste-based reservations and quotas have been implemented to ensure representation and social justice, acknowledging the need for affirmative action to address historical inequalities. Caste also operates as a pressure group in India. Caste associations and organisations advocate for the rights and interests of their respective caste groups. They exert influence on the government through lobbying, public demonstrations, and legal interventions. These pressure groups play a vital role in raising caste-specific issues, promoting solidarity among caste communities, and influencing public discourse on caste-related matters.



Assignments

1. The caste system in India is a complex social phenomenon with deep historical roots. Explain the basics of the caste system, its salient features, and the ways in which it has evolved over time.
2. Caste mobilisation and politicisation have played a significant role in shaping Indian society and politics. Discuss the process of caste mobilisation in India, the challenges faced by marginalised castes, and the impact of caste-based political alliances.
3. Caste as a pressure group has the power to influence government policies and bring about social transformation. Analyse the role of caste associations and organisations as pressure groups, their methods of exerting influence, and the implications of their actions.
4. The changing nature of the caste system in India reflects the impact of modernisation, globalisation, and social movements. Explore the evolving dynamics of the caste system, the challenges and opportunities presented by modern influences, and the role of social movements in challenging caste-based discrimination.
5. Elaborate on the system of social relations which has been a central point in Hindu society for several centuries.
6. Participants of pressure group have banded together to promote and defend a shared cause. Elaborate.
7. The traditional hierarchical ordering of castes was based on the distinction between Purity and Pollution. Why?
8. Explain the effect of caste in the voting behavior.

Suggested Readings

1. Dumont, L. (1980). *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. U.S.A: University of Chicago Press.
2. Srinivas, M. N. (1962). *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Mumbai: Asia Publishing House.
3. Jodhka, S. S. (2012). *Caste and Politics in India*. U.S.A: Oxford University Press.



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1. Dirks, N. B. (2001). *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and The Making of Modern India*. U.S.A: Princeton University Press.
2. Johnson, Harry M. (1995). *Sociology: A Systematic Introduction*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.
3. Jayaram, N. (1988). *Introductory Sociology*. Madras: Macmillan India.
4. Srinivas, M. N. (1962). *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Mumbai: Asia Publishing House.
5. Jodhka, S. S. (2012). *Caste and Politics in India*. U.S.A: Oxford University Press.
6. Weiner, M. (2015). *Party Politics in India: The Development of a Multi-Party System*. Princeton University Press.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Class Structure in Indian Society

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the concept of class structure in Indian society and its significance in shaping social relations, economic opportunities, and access to resources
- ◆ identify and describe the key characteristics and dynamics of the agrarian class, working class, industrial class, and emerging middle class in Indian society, including their occupations, living conditions, and social mobility
- ◆ analyse the impact of globalisation, urbanisation, and economic reforms on the transformation of the class structure in India, and assess the implications for social inequality and social mobility

Background

India, a tapestry of vibrant cultures and diverse traditions, is home to a social fabric intricately woven with various classes that contribute to the multifaceted structure of Indian society. This introductory journey invites you to explore the fascinating dynamics of the class structure in India, focusing on four key classes: the Agrarian Class, the Working Class, the Industrial Class, and the Emerging Middle Class. The Agrarian Class deeply rooted in India's agricultural sector, discover the lives of farmers, landowners, and laborers who toil the fertile lands, cultivating crops that sustain the nation. They unearth the challenges from unpredictable weather patterns to the ever-present struggles of rural life.

The Working Class is the backbone of the industrial and service sectors. Here, we focus on the factory workers, skilled artisans, and service providers who contribute their labor to fuel India's economic engine and gain insights into their working conditions, aspirations, and the social and economic challenges they navigate daily. We also explore the dynamic realm of the Industrial Class. Here we can witness the transformative power of industrialisation and technological advancements that have shaped India's manufacturing landscape. Examining



the emergence of new industries and the impact they have on employment, urbanisation, and economic growth and uncovering the stories of entrepreneurs, innovators, and visionaries who have carved a niche within this evolving class are crucial. Lastly, we encounter the Emerging Middle Class, a burgeoning segment that embodies the aspirations of upward social mobility and reflects the changing socio-economic landscape of India. Exploring their lifestyles, aspirations, and changing patterns of consumption and gaining an understanding of how this class drives economic growth, shapes consumer trends, and acts as a catalyst for societal change.

Keywords

Stratification, Consciousness, Labour, Industrialisation

Discussion

- ◆ System of societal stratification



The class system is a system of societal stratification based on factors such as education, property, and occupation. It serves as a significant form of social differentiation. While the caste system is unique to India, the class system is universal, observed across various societies. It is a dynamic structure, and the term “class” can also refer to groups such as professors, artists, engineers, and doctors. Additionally, the word “class” is used to describe the quality of things, ranging from good to best. A person’s class is determined by their social status, wealth, power, educational attainment, and accomplishments.

- ◆ Universal form of social stratification



Unlike caste, class membership is not bound by customs, rituals, or traditions. Class plays a crucial role in social stratification, often influencing an individual’s position within society. Classes are categorised groups of people, ranked based on specific criteria. They represent social groups occupying varying positions of high or low status within a given society. Social classes emerge as a consequence of the division of labor. Within a social class, individuals consider themselves as equals, forming subcultures with distinct attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that differentiate them from other classes. Social class encompasses a person’s overall social and economic position within a community, incorporating factors such as wealth,

- ◆ Categorisation based on criteria



income, occupation, education, and self-identification. It is a multidimensional concept that captures the broader socio-economic context in which individuals exist.

3.2.1 Definitions of Class System

The class system is a form of social stratification that categorises individuals in society based on their socioeconomic status, occupation, wealth, and power. It is a system where individuals are grouped into distinct classes, each occupying a different position in the social hierarchy. The definitions of the class system vary among sociologists, but they all emphasise the division of society into different strata based on economic and social factors.

P.Gisbert: “A class is a category or group of persons having a definite status in society which permanently determines their relation to other groups.”

Ogburn and Nimkoff: “A class is the aggregate of persons having essentially the same social status in a given society.”

Max Weber: “Classes are aggregates of individuals ‘who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living.’”

Lapire: “A class is culturally defined group that is accorded a particular position of status within the population as a whole.”

Karl Max - ‘Man is a class animal’ i.e. his status age, education etc are not same in the society.

Thus, it is clear that social class is a segment of society with all the members of all ages and both the sexes who share the same general status. As MacIver says, whenever social intercourse is limited by the consideration of social status by distinctions between higher and lower, there exists a social class.

3.2.1.1 Characteristics of Class System

Understanding the characteristics of the class system is crucial for comprehending social stratification and its implications on various aspects of society. The following discussion explores the key characteristics that define the class system.



- ◆ Distinct position

i) Social Stratification: The class system involves the division of society into different social strata or classes, each occupying a distinct position in the social hierarchy. Individuals are categorised into classes based on their economic resources, such as wealth and income, as well as their occupational prestige. This hierarchical structure reflects unequal distribution of power, opportunities, and resources within society.
- ◆ Inequal access to resources

ii) Economic Inequality: One of the defining features of the class system is the existence of economic inequality. Classes vary in terms of wealth, income, and access to resources. The upper class consists of individuals who possess significant wealth, property, and influential positions, while the lower class comprises individuals with limited economic resources and often face financial challenges. This economic disparity shapes individuals' opportunities, living conditions, and overall quality of life.
- ◆ Movements in social ladder

iii) Social Mobility: Social mobility refers to the ability of individuals to move up or down the social ladder within the class system. It is influenced by factors such as education, occupation, inheritance, and opportunities for career advancement. Mobility can be intergenerational, where individuals' social status is influenced by their parents' class, or intragenerational, where individuals experience upward or downward mobility within their lifetime. The extent of social mobility within a society varies and can be influenced by societal structures, such as access to education, discrimination, and social barriers.
- ◆ Dynamic of power

iv) Power and Privilege: Power dynamics play a significant role in the class system. The upper class tends to hold substantial economic, political, and social power, allowing them to influence decision-making processes and societal institutions. This power imbalance creates privileges and advantages for the upper class, such as better access to education, healthcare, and influential networks. In contrast, the lower class often faces limited power and fewer opportunities for upward social mobility.
- ◆ Individual identity

v) Cultural Differences: Each class within the class system develops its own distinct culture, lifestyle, values, and norms. Cultural differences arise from the unique experiences, socialisation processes, and opportunities associated with specific classes. For example, the upper class may have access to exclusive cultural events, prestigious

educational institutions, and luxury goods, while the lower class may have different cultural expressions and limited access to such resources. These cultural differences contribute to social divisions and shape individuals' identities and social interactions.

3.2.2 Class Structure in Indian Society

Class structure is a fundamental aspect of social organisation in Indian society. It encompasses the hierarchical arrangement of individuals based on their socio economic status, occupation, and access to resources. Understanding the class structure in Indian society provides insights into social stratification, power dynamics, and economic disparities. Major class structures that includes in the of Indian society is:

1. Agrarian Class
2. Working Class
3. Industrial Class
4. Emerging Middle Class

1. Agrarian Class

The concept of the 'agrarian class structure' refers to the type of class structure that exists in an agricultural society or setting. Scholars such as S. Bhargava, D.R. Gadgil, and others have highlighted the existence of agrarian classes in pre-independent India. Agrarian class structure in India varies from one region to another; the relations among classes and social composition of groups that occupy specific class positions in relation to land-control and land-use in India are so diverse and complex that it is difficult to incorporate them all in a general scheme. They have emerged out of multidimensional forces and their bearing in space and time. If we analyse class structure in rural India in post-independence period, we find four classes: the three classes in the agricultural field are of land owners, tenants, and labourers, while the fourth class is of non-agriculturalists.

◆ Land control

According to A.R. Desai, landowners constitute about 22 percent, tenants about 27 percent, agricultural labourers about 31 percent and non-agriculturalists about 20 percent. It shows that agrarian social structure encompasses various social groups within rural India. Daniel Thorner proposed a division of the agrarian population into different class categories based on three criteria:



◆ Income, Rights and involvement

- a) Income derived from land, including rent, personal cultivation, or wages.
- b) The nature of rights, such as ownership rights, tenancy rights, sharecropping rights, or no rights at all.
- c) The level of involvement in fieldwork, ranging from no work at all, partial work, total work, to working for others in exchange for wages.

The three agrarian classes which Daniel Thorner spoke of are (a) Malik, (b) Kisan, and (c) Mazdoor. According to Thorner, prevalent agrarian relations can also be analysed in terms of three specific terms.

a) Maliks or Landlords:

◆ Land property rights

The term 'Maliks' refers to the large landlords and considerably wealthy landowners who belong to the affluent class within the village structure. Their income predominantly stems from their property rights over the land, and their collective interest lies in maintaining high levels of rent while keeping wages low. Maliks collect rent from tenants, sub-tenants, and sharecroppers. This category of landowners can be further divided into two subcategories:

◆ Control on agricultural activities

(i) Zamindars: Zamindars are powerful landlords who exercise significant control and influence over the agricultural activities in the village. They possess substantial land holdings and often hold privileged positions in society. Zamindars typically lease out their land to sharecroppers or collect rent from tenant farmers.

◆ Land grants

(ii) Jagirdars: Jagirdars are landowners who have received land grants or jagirs from the ruling authorities. These grants are often hereditary, and jagirdars hold administrative and revenue collection rights over the land. They may also extract a portion of the agricultural produce as revenue.

◆ Socio-economic dynamics

The Maliks, comprising both Zamindars and Jagirdars, form a crucial part of the agrarian class structure in India. They wield economic and social power, influencing the distribution of resources and shaping the economic relations within the rural community. Their role in land ownership and rent collection has significant implications for the socio-economic dynamics of the village set up.

b) Kisans or Working Peasants:

- ◆ Possess small plots of land

The term 'Kisans' refers to the working peasants who engage in agricultural activities. They typically own small plots of land and rely heavily on their own labor as well as that of their family members. In comparison to the Maliks, Kisans possess significantly smaller land holdings. The Kisan class plays a vital role in the agrarian structure of Indian society. They are the backbone of agricultural production and contribute significantly to the rural economy.

- ◆ Self sufficiency

Despite facing challenges such as limited land resources and fluctuating market conditions, Kisans demonstrate resilience and self-sufficiency by utilising their own labor and employing traditional farming methods. Their livelihoods are closely tied to the success of their agricultural endeavors, making them integral to the socio-economic fabric of rural communities. The Kisan class can be further divided into two sub-categories:

- ◆ Own sufficient land

(i) Small Landowners: This group consists of Kisans who own sufficient land to sustain their families. They primarily rely on the labor of their family members for cultivation. Small landowners do not receive rent from others for their land and usually do not hire external labor, unless it becomes absolutely necessary during specific seasons or circumstances.

- ◆ No owning of sufficient land

(ii) Substantial Tenants: These are tenants who do not own any land but cultivate a relatively large holding that enables them to support their families without having to work as wage laborers. Substantial tenants lease land from landowners, either on a long-term or seasonal basis, and engage in farming activities to meet their household needs.

- ◆ Landless villagers
- ◆ Lack of land ownership

c) Mazdoors or Labourers: The term 'Mazdoors' refers to the landless villagers in the rural context who primarily earn their livelihood by working as laborers on a wage basis. They rely on working on other people's land for their income. This class represents a marginalised segment of the rural population in Indian society. They face significant socio-economic challenges due to their lack of land ownership and limited access to resources. Their livelihoods are dependent on manual labor, and they often experience exploitation, low wages, and job insecurity. Efforts to improve the living conditions and rights of Mazdoors have been the focus of various social and policy initiatives aimed at addressing rural poverty and inequality. The Mazdoor class can be further categorised as follows:



- ◆ Tenancy rights
 - a. Poor Tenants: This group includes individuals who have tenancy rights but face insecurity in their land tenure. They typically have small land holdings that are insufficient to support their families, and their income is limited. Poor tenants often struggle with precarious living conditions and economic vulnerability.
- ◆ Sharing of crops
 - b. Sharecroppers: Sharecroppers are individuals who either work as tenants-at-will, without any secure lease agreement, or cultivate others' land on a sharecropping basis. As sharecroppers, they earn a share of the crop produced as their compensation for their labor. Sharecropping arrangements vary in terms of the specific terms and conditions agreed upon between the sharecropper and the landowner.
- ◆ Temporary Labour
 - c. Landless Labourers: This category comprises individuals who engage in temporary labor work on other people's land without any specific contractual or conditional relationship with the landlord. Landless laborers often move from one agricultural season to another, seeking employment opportunities. They depend on these temporary labor engagements to sustain themselves and their families.

2. Working Class

- ◆ Labour with no capital

"Working class" is a socio-economic term used to describe individuals belonging to a social class characterised by low-paying jobs, limited skill requirements, or physical labor. Generally, working class occupations have lower education requirements. The working class often includes unemployed individuals or those who rely on social welfare programs. This socio-economic group primarily relies on their labor as they possess minimal or no capital. India has a rich history of an agricultural economy predominantly supported by peasants and artisans in the 1800s.

- ◆ Displacement

During the British Industrial Revolution, artisans in India played a significant role in producing raw materials and goods for the British market. With its abundant resources, India became a supplier of raw materials like coal, cotton, and jute, leading to the exploitation of the country's peasantry for cheap exports to England. Consequently, artisans were displaced and faced unemployment, with limited industrial job opportunities at that time.

However, industrialisation gained momentum in India in the mid-1800s, leading to an increase in employment

◆ Working class movements

opportunities. Unfortunately, the working class experienced exploitation through long working hours, strenuous physical labor, and inadequate wages. Nevertheless, the late 1800s witnessed the emergence of the working-class movement in India, which led to significant improvements, particularly with the establishment of public sector undertakings in the nation after independence.

◆ Earning jobs

The working class, also known as the laboring class, primarily consists of individuals engaged in manual labor occupations or industrial work, receiving compensation through wages or salaries. This category includes blue-collar jobs and many pink-collar jobs as well. The working class relies solely on earnings from wage labor. Therefore, based on more comprehensive definitions, the working class encompasses a significant portion of the working population in industrialised economies, as well as those employed in urban areas (cities, towns, villages) in non-industrialized economies or the rural workforce.

◆ White collar and blue collar jobs

The working class is defined and utilised in various ways. A widely accepted definition, commonly employed by sociologist, is that the working class comprises individuals who have nothing to offer except their labor. In the past, these individuals were referred to as the proletariat, although this term has fallen out of favor. In this context, the working class encompasses both white-collar and blue-collar workers, encompassing manual laborers and workers of various occupations, excluding only those who derive their livelihood from owning businesses and employing others. The term is often used to evoke the image of laborers facing “class disadvantage despite their individual efforts,” and it can also carry racial connotations.

a) Characteristics of Working Class

◆ No accumulation of capital

Discretionary (open) Income: The income of the working class is consumed by basic expenses such as housing, healthcare, education, clothing, food, and transportation, leaving them with little to no discretionary income. Consequently, the working class is unable to save or accumulate capital.

◆ Valuable assets

Capital: Capital refers to valuable assets that can generate income, including property, structures, machinery, equipment, vehicles, and software. The working class typically does not own or control their own capital, instead relying on employment under others. For instance, a chef who



owns their own restaurant belongs to the petite bourgeoisie, whereas a chef who works for someone else is typically classified as working class.

- ◆ Seeking employment

Employment: The term “working class” applies to individuals and their families who are employed or actively seeking employment. There are a few exceptions to this rule, such as working-class individuals who are retired or disabled. Individuals without capital who seldom or never work are referred to as the lumpenproletariat. This class can be significant in societies with comprehensive welfare systems or regions plagued by chronic unemployment, where people may give up on finding work.

- ◆ Exploitative working conditions

Working Conditions: The working class is characterised by limited discretionary income and lack of capital. This applies to both blue-collar workers engaged in physical labor and white-collar workers performing office work. Blue-collar or white-collar workers who have discretionary income are considered middle class. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that the working class consists solely of blue-collar workers. Their working conditions are inadequate and exploitative.

- ◆ Identifying the similarities

Class Consciousness: Class consciousness refers to the extent to which individuals in similar social and economic circumstances identify with each other as a group. Although individuals may technically belong to the working class, they may or may not identify themselves as such. In many cases, people may identify with a more affluent class or prioritise other aspects of their identity, such as ethnicity.

- ◆ Revolution

Politics: In cases where class consciousness exists, the working class may support political parties and organisations that represent their interests. Additionally, the working class possesses significant potential for revolutionary movements, particularly when they perceive the capitalist ruling class as villainous and corrupt.

- ◆ Resonation

Culture: The working class has a distinct culture within each society, shaped by shared experiences. This culture encompasses norms, expectations, values, language, pastimes, celebrations, symbols, literature, art, and film that resonate with the working-class experience.

3. Industrial Class

The industrial class refers to a social class that is associated with industrial occupations and the industrial sector of the economy. It includes individuals employed in

- industries such as manufacturing, production, engineering, and other related fields. The industrial class is characterised by its involvement in industrial production processes, often working with machinery, technology, and specialised skills. Members of the industrial class are typically engaged in occupations that require specific technical knowledge, training, and expertise. They contribute to the production of goods and services, playing a crucial role in the industrialisation and economic. The following are the main characteristic features of this class:
- ◆ Industrial occupation
 - i) Occupation and Employment:** The industrial class consists of individuals who work in industries involved in manufacturing, production, engineering, and other industrial sectors. They are employed in various roles such as machine operators, technicians, engineers, assembly line workers, supervisors, and managers. These occupations require specific skills and expertise related to the industrial processes and technologies.
 - ◆ Specific skills
 - ii) Technical Knowledge and Specialisation:** Members of the industrial class possess technical knowledge and specialised skills relevant to their respective industries. They often undergo training and education to acquire the necessary qualifications for their roles. The industrial sector relies on their expertise to operate machinery, utilise technology, and ensure efficient production processes.
 - ◆ Expertise
 - iii) Involvement in Industrial Production:** The industrial class is directly involved in the production of goods and services. They contribute to the transformation of raw materials into finished products through manufacturing processes. Their work is centered around machinery, equipment, and technology, which are crucial for efficient and large-scale production.
 - ◆ Production of goods and services
 - iv) Economic Significance:** The industrial class plays a vital role in the economic development of a society. Industrial production creates employment opportunities, contributes to economic growth, and drives technological advancements. The industrial sector often serves as a backbone of the economy, fostering innovation, productivity, and trade.
 - ◆ Productivity
 - v) Working Conditions:** The working conditions within the industrial class can vary depending on the industry, company, and geographical location. While some industries may offer favorable working environments, others may present challenges such as physically demanding work,
 - ◆ Necessity of health and safety measures

exposure to hazards, or shift-based schedules. Occupational health and safety measures are important considerations to ensure the well-being of industrial workers.

◆ Labour initiatives

vi) Unionisation and Collective Bargaining: Due to the concentration of workers in industrial occupations, the industrial class has historically been associated with labor movements and trade unions. Workers within this class often join unions to collectively negotiate for better wages, working conditions, and benefits. Unionisation provides a platform for workers to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights.

◆ Competitiveness

vii) Technological Advances and Automation: The industrial class experiences the impact of technological advances and automation. Automation and the adoption of new technologies can lead to changes in job requirements and skills. While technological advancements can enhance efficiency and productivity, they can also result in job displacement or the need for workers to acquire new skills to remain competitive.

◆ Career options

viii) Social Mobility: The industrial class can offer opportunities for social mobility, as individuals can advance in their careers through acquiring higher-level skills, gaining experience, and taking on leadership roles. Education, training, and access to career development programs are important factors that influence social mobility within the industrial class.

The effects of industrialisation in the society:

- ◆ The percentage of workers engaged in agriculture has come down while that of workers engaged in individual activities has gone up.
- ◆ The process of social mobility has accelerated.
- ◆ Trade unions have organised industrial workers to fight for their rights.
- ◆ Since industrial workers maintain continued and close relationship with their kin-groups and castes, caste stratification has not affected class character.
- ◆ The traditional and charismatic elite have been replaced by the professional elite.

4. Emerging Middle Class

The emerging middle class refers to a social group that is experiencing upward mobility and transitioning from lower-income levels to a higher socio-economic status. This

◆ Economic development

segment of the population is characterised by improving living standards, increased income, access to education, and better job opportunities. The emerging middle class plays a significant role in economic growth, social development, and political dynamics. However, it is important to note that most of the emerging middle class consists of people who are considered middle class by the standards of the developing world but not the developed world.

◆ New forms of politics and norms

While their income levels may not match those of developed countries, a significant percentage of their income is discretionary. The middle class in colonial India was the result of a lengthy historical process and was established through the creation of new forms of politics, the restructuring of social norms, and the development of new values that guided both domestic and public life. These transformations, whether political, social, or cultural, reflected the concerns and inherent contradictions of the middle class. Understanding the formation of this middle class and how it gained prominence in public affairs is crucial for comprehending the cultural and political landscape of the 21st century.

◆ Intermediate socio-economic level

By examining the historical context and societal changes that shaped the middle class in colonial India, we gain insight into the factors that contribute to the emergence and growth of middle-class populations worldwide. The middle class's rising social and economic status has implications for economic development, social stability, and political participation. It is a group that often seeks better opportunities, improved living conditions, and social mobility for themselves and future generations.

◆ Objective indicators

Measured by any set of objective indicators such as income, consumption, occupation, or even education, the social groups described as the middle class in colonial India were in the top two deciles of the population. Most of the men who identified themselves as middle class were upper-caste Hindus, Ashraf (high-born) Muslims, or other high-status groups. Many came from so-called service communities, meaning families and social groups who traditionally served in the courts of indigenous rulers and large landlords.

Exposure to Western-style education was undoubtedly the most crucial and marketable skill that contributed to the formation of the middle class. However, simply having knowledge of English, a similar family background, or



◆ Cultural politics and social influence

even exposure to Western education did not automatically transform these educated individuals into the middle class. Education and literary accomplishments had long been valued even before the British arrived in India. What set the 19th-century middle class apart was the emergence of new cultural politics that enabled them to express a distinct set of beliefs, values, and modes of politics, differentiating themselves from other social groups both below and above them. Through these endeavors, they became significant players in the social and political life of colonial India.

◆ Public sphere

British rule in India may have facilitated the emergence of a public sphere, but it was ultimately the efforts of educated Indians that brought it into existence. They invested in presses, worked as journalists, established civic and political associations, and published and debated their ideas in the press or within the forums of their associations. Through these activities and by controlling the public sphere, educated individuals, who were respectable but not necessarily the richest, most powerful, or influential, successfully portrayed themselves as the middle class.

◆ Shaping of society

The public sphere served as a platform that universalized middle-class norms and allowed this social class to assert its authority over the social, political, and cultural conduct of colonial Indian society. Utilising the new institutions of the public sphere, these men redefined the notions of respectability to differentiate themselves from both the upper and lower classes. They claimed a moral superiority over these classes, thus playing a significant role in shaping the constitution of a middle class. These elements were crucial in defining and establishing the middle class in colonial India.

◆ The role of religion

Religion played a significant role in the activities of middle-class activists during colonial India. One notable example of how middle-class concerns influenced the social and cultural landscape is the growth and popularity of the Arya Samaj. Throughout the 19th century, various middle-class Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and other religious groups led comparable movements. These initiatives aimed to establish a new form of religious practice rooted in a perceived “authenticity,” granting these individuals greater influence in the cultural and social aspects of their communities.

The middle class represents a social class positioned between higher and lower tiers of the social hierarchy. Its definition has often been ambiguous, encompassing factors

◆ Middle class identification

such as occupation, income, education, and social status. Historically, the term has been associated with modernity, capitalism, and political discourse. Some scholars argue that the middle class is gradually disappearing in Western societies. In the context of capitalism, the middle class initially referred to the bourgeoisie, distinct from the nobility. However, as capitalist societies further differentiated into various classes, the term became synonymous with the petite bourgeoisie, as the capitalist class assumed the role of the ruling class. The specific criteria for identifying the middle class vary significantly across different cultures, primarily relying on socio-economic status as a key measure.

Summarised Overview

Class structure in Indian society encompasses various social classes, including the agrarian class, working class, industrial class, and emerging middle class. The agrarian class consists of individuals primarily engaged in agricultural activities, such as owning or leasing land and cultivating crops. They play a vital role in rural economies and their well-being is tied to factors like land ownership and government policies related to agriculture. The working class comprises individuals involved in manual labor or industrial work, often remunerated through waged or salaried contracts. They rely on their labor for income and face challenges like low wages and limited job security. The working class is diverse, including blue-collar and pink-collar workers across different industries. The industrial class refers to individuals employed in industrial occupations, such as manufacturing and production. They contribute to the production of goods and services, utilising machinery, technology, and specialised skills. The industrial class plays a significant role in driving economic growth and technological advancements. The emerging middle class represents a social group experiencing upward mobility, transitioning from lower-income levels to a higher socio-economic status. They enjoy improving living standards, increased income, access to education, and better job opportunities. This class plays a crucial role in economic growth, social development, and political dynamics. Their emergence is influenced by factors like urbanisation, economic reforms, and expanding opportunities in sectors like services and information technology.

Assignments

1. Discuss the characteristics and significance of the agrarian class in Indian society. How does their role in agriculture impact rural economies and the overall social structure?
2. Analyse the challenges faced by the working class in India. What are the factors contributing to their low wages, job insecurity, and limited social mobility? Discuss the importance of addressing these issues for the well-being of the working class and the overall economy.
3. Explore the evolution and role of the industrial class in Indian society. How has industrialisation impacted the economy and employment opportunities? Discuss the contribution of the industrial class to technological advancements and economic growth.
4. Examine the concept of the emerging middle class in India. Discuss the factors contributing to their upward mobility and improved socio-economic status.
5. Analyse the role of the emerging middle class in driving economic growth, social development, and political dynamics in the country.
6. "Classes are aggregates of individuals 'who have the same opportunities of acquiring goods, the same exhibited standard of living'". Elaborate.
7. Class system is based on Occupation. Validate the statement.
8. According to Thorner, prevalent agrarian relations can also be analysed in terms of three specific terms like Maliks, Kisans and Mazdoors. Explain in detail.

Suggested Readings

1. Chatterjee, P. (1993). *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. U.S.A: Princeton University Press.
2. Bottomore, T.B. (2014) *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature*. New Delhi: Rutledge.
3. Harlambos, M (1980) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. U.S.A: Oxford University Press.
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1. Smith, B. (2010). *Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe*. England: Cambridge University Press.
2. Das, R. (2015). *The Working Class in Modern India: History, Discourse, and Politics*. U.S.A: Oxford University Press.
3. Bhattacharya, S., & Das, R. (Eds.). (2020). *The Industrial Working Class in Contemporary India: Towards a Class Politics*. New Delhi: Routledge.
4. Davis, K. (2000). *Human Society*. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Tribes in India

Learning Outcomes

After completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ examine the politicisation of tribes and its impact on their identity and rights
- ◆ analyse the challenges faced by tribal communities in political mobilisation and participation
- ◆ evaluate government policies and interventions aimed at addressing tribal concerns and aspirations
- ◆ develop an appreciation for the cultural diversity and unique traditions of tribes in India

Background

India is a land of diverse cultures and communities, among which tribes hold a significant place. With a rich and ancient history, the tribes in India, also known as Adivasis, have inhabited the country's vast landscapes for centuries. These indigenous communities have unique languages, customs, and traditions that have shaped their identities and ways of life. However, the tribal communities in India have not been immune to the forces of change and transformation that have swept across the nation. The causes of transformation among tribes in India are rooted in a complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, and political factors. Over time, various forces have influenced and impacted these communities, leading to significant shifts in their socio-cultural fabric, economic livelihoods, and political engagement. Modernisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and government policies have all played crucial roles in shaping the trajectory of tribal transformation. The consequences of these transformations have been profound and have affected multiple aspects of tribal life. Socio-cultural, changes in family structures, gender roles, and social dynamics have occurred within tribal communities. Economic transformations have disrupted traditional livelihood patterns, as tribes have increasingly shifted from subsistence-based agricultural practices and forest-dependent economies



to engaging in wage labor and market-oriented activities. Such shifts have often come with both opportunities and challenges, presenting tribes with new forms of socio-economic disparities and marginalisation.

One crucial aspect of the tribal transformation in India is the Politicisation of tribes. Historically marginalised and facing social, economic, and political discrimination, tribal communities have sought political empowerment and agency. This has led to the emergence of tribal political movements, organisations, and demands for inclusive representation, rights, and development. The Politicisation of tribes has brought their concerns to the forefront of national discourse, as these communities strive to secure their rightful place in the socio-political landscape of India.

Keywords

Political consciousness, Marginalisation, Tribal politics, Tribal communities

Discussion

◆ Commonness

The concept of tribe is an important aspect of understanding the social, cultural, and historical dynamics of human societies. A tribe can be defined as a social group consisting of people who share common ancestry, cultural practices, and often occupy a specific territory or geographical area. Tribes have existed in various parts of the world since ancient times and continue to play significant roles in shaping societies today.

◆ Social cohesion

The concept of tribe encompasses a range of characteristics and features that distinguish these groups from other social units. One key element of tribal communities is their strong sense of collective identity, which is based on shared cultural traditions, language, customs, and often a common historical lineage. This collective identity forms the foundation of social cohesion within tribes and contributes to a sense of belonging and solidarity among their members.

Tribes typically have their own distinct socio-political systems, which are often characterised by a combination of kinship ties, hierarchical structures, and customary

◆ Socio-political system

laws. Leadership roles within tribes are often hereditary, with chiefs or elders holding positions of authority and responsibility. Decision-making processes and governance structures are based on consensus, consultation, and the maintenance of harmony within the community. Another defining aspect of tribes is their close relationship with the natural environment.

◆ Coexistence with nature

Many tribes have traditionally relied on subsistence-based economies, engaging in activities such as agriculture, hunting, fishing, and gathering. Their knowledge of the local ecosystems, resource management practices, and sustainable use of natural resources have often been passed down through generations, contributing to their resilience and adaptability. Tribal communities have historically occupied diverse geographical regions, ranging from forests, mountains, deserts, and plains. Their territorial boundaries and connection to specific lands are integral to their cultural and spiritual beliefs. These territories are not only sources of livelihood but also hold immense cultural significance, serving as ancestral homelands and sacred spaces.

◆ Social interactions

Throughout history, tribes have interacted with neighboring communities, including other tribes, states, and empires. These interactions have often led to cultural exchanges, alliances, conflicts, and even assimilation. The relationships between tribes and external powers have shaped the trajectories of tribal societies, influencing their socio-cultural practices, political organisation, and economic activities. It is essential to recognise that the concept of tribe is not a static or monolithic one. Tribal societies are dynamic and subject to change over time due to various internal and external factors.

◆ Socio-cultural dynamic and resilience

Factors such as globalisation, urbanisation, migration, technological advancements, and state policies have all had profound impacts on tribal communities, altering their socio-cultural landscapes and challenging their traditional ways of life. It is important to approach the concept of tribe with sensitivity and avoid essentialising or romanticising these communities. While tribes possess unique cultural traditions and identities, they are diverse and heterogeneous in their own right. There is significant variation among tribes in terms of their socio-cultural practices, economic activities, levels of development, and engagement with the modern world.



The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the report for the year 1952 has listed eight such common features.

They are:

◆ Primitive and isolated community

- ◆ They live away from the civilised world in the inaccessible part lying in the forests and hills.
- ◆ They belong to either one of the three stocks- Negritos, Australoid or Mongoloids.
- ◆ They speak the same tribal dialect and profess primitive soul known as Animism, in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.
- ◆ They follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting, and gathering of forest product.
- ◆ They are largely carnivorous or flesh and meat eaters.
- ◆ They live either naked or semi- naked using tree-barks and leaves for clothing.
- ◆ They have nomadic habits and love for drink and dance.

3.3.1 Definitions of Tribe

The definition of the term “tribe” has been a subject of scholarly debate and has evolved over time. Various disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, and political science, have put forth different perspectives and interpretations regarding the meaning and understanding of tribes. The concept of tribe is complex and multifaceted, and it is important to consider diverse viewpoints in comprehending its definitions. From a sociological perspective, tribes are considered as intermediate social units between smaller kinship-based groups and larger nation-states.

◆ Intermediate social units

Sociologists have highlighted the significance of social organisation and solidarity within tribes, where individuals maintain strong bonds based on shared ancestry, mutual cooperation, and communal living. The social cohesion of tribes is often reinforced by kinship networks, common norms, and patterns of behavior that regulate social interactions.

◆ Strong bonds and shared norms

D.N. Majumdar defines tribe as “a social group with territorial affiliation endogamous with no specialisation of functions ruled by tribal officers hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognising social distance with other tribes or castes.” In Indian Context, T.B Naik has given the following features of tribes:

- ◆ Endogamous and politically unorganised community



- ◆ A tribe should have least functional interdependence within the community.
- ◆ Economically backward (i.e., primitive and traditional means of exploiting natural resources, tribal economy should be at an underdeveloped stage and have multifarious economic pursuits).
- ◆ A comparative geographical isolation of its people.
- ◆ Have a common dialect and politically unorganised and community panchayat.
- ◆ Have their own customary laws.

- ◆ Avoiding stereotyping



It is important to note that the definition of tribe is not universally agreed upon and can vary based on cultural, historical, and regional contexts. Different societies and regions may have their own specific terms and classifications for social groups that resemble tribes. For instance, indigenous communities in different parts of the world may be referred to as tribes, clans, bands, or nations, each with its own connotations and meanings. Moreover, it is crucial to approach the definition of tribe with sensitivity and avoid stereotyping or oversimplification. Tribes are diverse and dynamic, and their characteristics can change over time due to various factors such as modernisation, globalisation, and socio-political transformations. The definitions of tribes should reflect this complexity and recognise the agency and diversity of tribal communities.

- ◆ Derogatory transformation of perception



3.3.1.1 Tribe as a Colonial Construct in India

The term “tribe” as applied in the Indian context emerged during the period of British colonial rule. Sociologists argue that the British administration played a central role in defining, categorising, and controlling diverse social groups within their colonial territories, ultimately shaping the understanding and perception of tribes. The British colonial administrator-ethnographers in India surveyed and carried out expeditions on tribes, but their methods were often questionable, leading to distortions in the perception of tribes as backward, uncivilised, and barbarous. The original meaning of “tribe” as per the Oxford English Dictionary referred to a group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor. However, under colonialism, the term underwent a disrespectful transformation, associating tribes with primitive and barbarous conditions.

Additionally, the tribal population is recognised as the aboriginal inhabitants of India, living in natural and



◆ Aboriginal inhabitants with distinct cultures

unpolluted surroundings with their traditional values, customs, and beliefs. Defining tribes has been a subject of debate among social scientists, but for administrative and development purposes, the Constitution provides a practical definition. According to the Constitution, tribes or tribal communities listed under Article 342 are considered Scheduled Tribes. The inclusion of tribal groups in the Scheduled list is determined through a procedure involving consultation with the governor of a state and specifying tribes through public notification. The characteristics considered for classification as Scheduled Tribes include primitive traits, geographic isolation, distinct culture, shyness of contact with the community at large, and economic backwardness.

◆ Colonial impact

Before British colonialism, India had a complex social fabric composed of diverse communities with distinct cultural practices, social structures, and identities. These communities organised around kinship ties and localised territoriality, each with its own internal dynamics and systems of governance. However, it was the colonial administrators and ethnographers who sought to impose their own classification systems and categorise these communities under the umbrella term “tribe.”

◆ Internal dynamics and variations.

The British colonial authorities embarked on surveys, censuses, and expeditions to study and document these communities in their quest for governance and control. However, their methods were often flawed and influenced by a Eurocentric bias. The colonial administrators approached these communities with preconceived notions of primitiveness, backwardness, and savagery, perceiving them as obstacles to be controlled and assimilated. Through the process of classification and enumeration, the colonial powers constructed a specific understanding of tribes, defining them as distinct social entities separate from mainstream society. This categorisation overlooked the complex internal dynamics and variations within these communities, reducing them to simplistic and stereotypical representations.

◆ Power dynamics

The colonial construction of tribes was embedded in power dynamics and served the interests of the colonial administration. The classification of tribes as separate and marginalised entities justified the imposition of colonial policies, land alienation, and the exploitation of tribal resources. By portraying tribes as primitive and uncivilised, the colonial authorities justified their own presence and claimed a civilising mission.

- ◆ Challenge to the colonial construct of tribes

This colonial construct of tribes has perpetuated stereotypes, stigmatization, and marginalisation of these communities, subjecting them to discrimination, economic exploitation, loss of land and resources, and limited access to education and basic services. In contemporary India, it is necessary to critically examine and challenge the colonial construct of tribes to recognise the diverse identities, cultures, and histories of these communities beyond the colonial categorisation. The focus should be on understanding the social, economic, and political dimensions of tribal communities and their struggles for recognition, rights, and self-determination.

3.3.1.2 Classification of Tribes

- ◆ Shaping of social dynamics

The classification of tribes is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the categorisation and organisation of diverse social groups based on certain criteria. The classification of tribes has significant implications for social dynamics, power relations, and the allocation of resources within a society. In many societies, including tribal societies, classification is inherent to social organisation. It helps individuals and groups understand their social positions, roles, and identities. However, when it comes to the classification of tribes, several sociological considerations arise.

- ◆ Social construct

Firstly, the process of classifying tribes is often influenced by external forces, such as colonial powers, government institutions, or researchers. These external actors bring their own biases, values, and objectives into the classification process, which can shape the understanding and perception of tribes. As a result, the classification of tribes is not always an objective and neutral exercise, but rather a social construct influenced by power dynamics and societal contexts.

- ◆ Criteria of classification

Secondly, the criteria used for classifying tribes vary across different societies and historical periods. Sociologists have identified various criteria employed in the classification of tribes, including cultural practices, economic activities, social organisation, and geographical location. These criteria are often interrelated, and the emphasis placed on each criterion can vary depending on the specific context. For example, in some cases, tribes may be classified based on their traditional practices, language, or religious beliefs, while in other cases, their classification may be primarily based on their economic activities or land ownership patterns.

- ◆ External forces and varying criteria

Thirdly, the classification of tribes can have significant consequences for the social and political standing of these communities. Being classified as a tribe often entails certain legal, economic, and social implications. Tribes may be granted specific rights, protections, or reservations under the law, or they may face discrimination and marginalisation due to their classification. The classification of tribes can affect their access to resources, representation in decision-making processes, and opportunities for development and social mobility. As a result, the classification of tribes can shape the social and economic disparities within a society.

- ◆ Tribal identity and perceptions

The classification of tribes can also influence how these communities perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. The labels and categories assigned to tribes can shape their self-identity, cultural practices, and intergroup relations. The classification of tribes can also contribute to the construction of stereotypes, stigmatisation, and the reinforcement of social inequalities. It is important to critically examine the social and political implications of these classifications and to challenge any negative or biased perceptions associated with them. In India the tribes have been designated as “Scheduled Tribes” under the Constitution. They have been classified in various categories. On the basis of language, area of inhabitation, occupation, cultural contact, and by the Tribal Welfare Committee, we may classify and group the Indian tribes into the following heads.

1. Linguistically Classified Groups: On the basis of language, Indian tribes have been classified into the following categories.

a) Austro-Asiatic Family: This group consists of the Mundas of central and eastern India, the Khasis of Assam, and the Nicobarese of the Nicobar Islands.

- ◆ Linguistic division

b) Dravidian Family: This group is prominent in central and southern India and includes the Gonds, Badaga, Toda, Yerava, Korwa, etc.

c) The Tibeto-Chinese Family: This group includes tribes that belong to the southern slopes of the Himalayas, stretching from northern Punjab to Bhutan and Assam. Examples include the Nagas, Kui, and Khasi tribes.

2. Geographically Classified Groups: From the perspective of the geographical distribution of tribes in

◆ Zonal divisions

India, three zones have been identified: the southern zone (between 8° to 20° north latitude and 75° to 85° east longitude), the central zone (between 21° to 25° north latitude and 73° to 90° east longitude), and the north and northeastern zone (between 26° to 35° north latitude and 73° to 97° east longitude). The southern zone encompasses the peninsular region of India and is believed to be inhabited by the most ancient tribal communities.

◆ Five fold division

Presently, it is represented by tribes such as the Todas, Paniyars, Kurumbas, Kotas, Soligas, Malayalees, and Chenchus, among others. The central zone is home to tribes like the Jurigas, Baigas, Gondas, Hos, and Bills, among others. The north and northeastern zone consists of tribes such as the Nagas, Charses, Khasis, Limbus, Abors, and others. In terms of the geographical distribution of Indian tribes, Vidyarthi proposed a fivefold division based on ecological, social, economic, administrative, ethnic, and racial factors. These tribal regions are as follows:

◆ Tribal region

(a) Southern Region: This region encompasses the southern part of India, including the peninsular states. It is characterised by tribes such as the Todas, Paniyars, Kurumbas, Kotas, Soligas, Malayalees, and Chenchus.

(b) Central Region: This region covers the central part of India and includes tribes like the Jurigas, Baigas, Gondas, Hos, and Bills.

(c) North Region: The northern region includes areas like the Himalayan foothills and the northern plains. Tribes found in this region include the Nagas, Charses, and Khasis.

(d) Northeast Region: This region comprises the northeastern states of India and is home to tribes such as the Limbus, Abors, and various other indigenous communities.

(e) Eastern Region: The eastern region covers states like Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. It is inhabited by tribes like the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, and others.

These five regions provide a framework for understanding the distribution and diversity of tribes across India, taking into account various geographical, social, and cultural factors.

3. Economically Classified Groups: We may also classify the tribes on the basis of their occupation and distinctive economy. This classification is based on the level of economic

development from food gathering and hunting stages to shifting and settled cultivation. Majumdar and Madan made the six-fold economic classification which includes:

◆ Distinctive economy

1. Food gathering tribes
2. Agricultural tribes
3. Tribes who practise shifting cultivation
4. Tribes who maintain their livelihood on the basis of their handicrafts
5. Tribes who practise pastoralism
6. Tribes who are industrial labour

Vidyarthi discussed on several occasions' tribal economy in India and there after a typology of eight types was finalised. Thus, the economic typology of the Indian tribes as proposed by L.P Vidyarthi is given below.

◆ Occupational and economic typology

1. The forest hunting type
2. The Hill cultivation type
3. The plain agriculture type
4. The simple Artisan type
5. The pastoral and cattle Herder type
6. The folk artist type
7. The agricultural and non-agricultural type (The tribe working in manufacturing industry)

The skilled white-collar Job and Traders type some individuals of the families of the tribal communities are working in the State and Central Government services owing the facilities of reservation for the tribes and so on.

◆ Aboriginal population

4. Classification on the basis of cultural contact: Apart from the above classification, we may also classify the Indian tribes on the basis of their culture and contact. According to Prof. Elwin, the aboriginal population is distributed into four cultural divisions. In the first group, they are living in the most primitive stage, Ex: Hill mariyas, Gadabas. These tribes are isolated from the people of plains. The main characteristics of these tribes are as follows:

◆ Own traditions

1. All the members lead a community life
2. All the members share a common economic structure
3. All the members are concentrated around a peculiar form of agriculture
4. They are honest, simple, and innocent and are very shy before the stranger

In the second and third group, they have more or less contact with the outsiders. On one side, these groups are linked with their own traditions and on the other side they are breaking the traditional links. Ex: Bhumias, Binijware and Gaigas. The chief characteristics of these tribes are as follows:

1. They lead an individualistic village life
2. Non participation in the common affairs
3. Absence of primitive simplicity

In the fourth group, they represent the ancient aristocracy of this country. For example, Bhilas, Nagas, Gonds and Santhals. These tribes retain their old tribal names and practise their tribal religion. But apart from this, they have also adopted the faiths of modern Hinduism and modern mode of living.

5. Classification by the Tribal Welfare Committee:

The tribal welfare committee constituted by the Indian conference of social work has divided the Indian tribes into the following.

◆ Differences in settlements

1. Tribal Communities: They are confined with the forests and distinctive in their pattern of life. Therefore, these may be termed as "Tribal Communities."
2. Semi Tribal Communities: These tribes are settled in rural areas and practise agriculture and other allied occupations.
3. Acculturated Tribal Communities: These tribes have migrated to urban and rural areas. They are engaged in industrial and other vocational activities and have adopted the culture of the people of migrated area.
4. Assimilated Tribes: These tribes are totally assimilated. They have lost the original traits of their own culture. In this regard the social reforms and Christian missionaries have played a very important role.



3.3.1.3 Tribal Problems in India

Tribal communities in India face numerous challenges and problems that hinder their socio-economic development and overall well-being. These problems arise from a complex interplay of historical, political, social, and economic factors. Understanding the challenges faced by tribal communities is crucial for formulating effective policies and interventions to address their needs. In general, the problems of the Indian tribes can be discussed under the following heads:

- ◆ Displacement and loss of livelihood


(1) Loss of Control over Natural Resources: Prior to the arrival of the British, tribal communities enjoyed unrestricted rights of ownership and management over natural resources such as land, forests, wildlife, water, soil, and fish. However, with the onset of industrialisation in India and the discovery of mineral and other resources in tribal-inhabited areas, these areas were opened up to outsiders, and state control replaced tribal control. This marked the beginning of endless hardships for the tribes. The development process after independence further intensified pressure on land and forests, resulting in the loss of ownership rights due to chronic indebtedness, unscrupulous landlords, moneylenders, contractors, and officials. The introduction of concepts like protected forests and national forests further uprooted the tribes from their cultural roots and left them without secure means of livelihood.
- ◆ Inadequate educational resources.


(2) Lack of Education: According to the 1991 Census, nearly 70 percent of tribal populations are illiterate. While education is recognised as an instrument for the betterment of tribes and their greater participation in the development process, several factors hinder tribal communities from pursuing education. These factors include tribal superstitions and prejudices, extreme poverty, the nomadic lifestyle of certain tribes, lack of interest in subjects taught in unfamiliar languages, and a dearth of suitable teachers and facilities in tribal areas.
- ◆ Industrial projects


(3) Displacement and Rehabilitation: Post-independence, the focus of the development process shifted towards heavy industries and the core sector, leading to the establishment of large steel plants, power projects, and dams, many of which were located in tribal-inhabited areas. Mining activities also accelerated in these regions. The government's acquisition of tribal land for these projects resulted in large-scale displacement of tribal populations. The tribal pockets of the Chhota Nagpur region, Orissa, West Bengal, and Madhya

Pradesh were particularly affected. The cash compensation provided by the government was often wasted on unnecessary expenses.

- ◆ Inadequate settlements and migration

Displaced tribals were not provided with proper settlements within industrial areas, forcing them to live on the outskirts in slums or migrate to neighboring states to work as unskilled laborers in impoverished conditions. Such migration to urban areas poses psychological challenges for tribals as they struggle to adapt to urban lifestyles and values.

- ◆ Deficiency and malnutrition

(4) Health and Nutrition Problems: Economic backwardness and precarious livelihoods contribute to health issues among tribal communities, including the prevalence of diseases such as malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and jaundice. Malnutrition-related problems, such as iron deficiency and anemia, are also common. Infant mortality rates are high, and life expectancy is generally low among tribal populations.

- ◆ Exploitative market economy

(5) Gender Issues: The degradation of the natural environment, particularly through deforestation and the diminishing availability of resources, has had adverse effects on the status of women in tribal communities. The opening of tribal regions to mining, industries, and commercialization has exposed tribal men and women to the exploitative dynamics of the market economy, leading to consumerism and the commodification of women.

- ◆ Institutional barriers

(6) Erosion of Identity: Traditional institutions and laws of tribal communities increasingly clash with modern institutions, creating concerns among tribes regarding the preservation of their identity. The extinction of tribal dialects and languages is another worrying factor as it signifies the erosion of tribal identity in certain areas.

3.3.2 Causes and Consequences of Transformation

- ◆ Losing of isolation

There are more than 400 groups in Indian society that are officially designated as Scheduled Tribes. These groups have been undergoing changes, and these changes have been observed and described by various individuals for nearly 100 years. However, the consequences and implications of these changes have been widely misunderstood. Anthropologists have traditionally believed that when a tribe loses its isolation and integrates closely with the wider society, it eventually transforms into a caste.



◆ Differentiated social entities

While this may have been true to some extent until the 1940s, this argument is no longer valid. Despite ongoing changes, tribes no longer automatically become castes. For example, the Oraon tribe today practices various religions, speaks multiple languages, and earns their livelihood through diverse agricultural and non-agricultural occupations. Yet, they still maintain their identity as Oraons in a socially significant way without becoming a caste with a specific position in the caste hierarchy. This argument has implications not only for understanding tribes but also for comprehending Indian society as a whole. The most important implication is that new castes are no longer being formed through the transformation of tribes or any other means. Tribes have evolved into differentiated social entities, including peasants, without losing their distinct identities, contrary to prevailing views.

◆ Re-structuring process

The term “social transformation” is increasingly used to describe social changes and generally reflects a critical perspective on older notions of development. It explains the impact of globalising forces on local communities with diverse historical experiences, economic and social patterns, political institutions, and cultures. However, the approach to social transformation does not necessarily advocate the imitation of Western models by all nations or societies. Instead, social transformation represents a shift in human aspirations that prioritise accessibility, ease, and comfort as ultimate objectives. The process of social transformation may involve restructuring technological, economic, political, and cultural patterns within a society.

◆ Critical perspectives on development

The societal value-normative system can change, often in a way that allows the emergence and stabilisation of pluralist institutions. Social transformation and identity are symbiotic in nature. In anthropology, identity is generally perceived in the context of ethnic identity, which represents the sameness of self and shared characteristics within a group. Social organisations, institutions, relations, and interaction patterns serve as markers that reflect the transformation process in a society. Similarly, all new engagements with these social markers closely follow ethnic identity, and vice versa.

Indian tribal communities have largely been marginalised from mainstream Indian identity politics. Simple political representation cannot replace the void of tribal power identity, as it is continuously manipulated by existing powerful forces. The tribal ethnic identity in modern India

◆ Identity politics

has historically been in the background until the 20th century. During this time, the representation of Indian tribal groups largely stood in stark contrast to modern Indian society in terms of identity politics.

◆ Identity challenge

At the same time, the advocacy for tribal rights by non-tribal forces has faced the challenge of rooted racism. Henry Louis Gates proposes that race is only a socio-political category, nothing more. Applying this socio-political category to individuals acts as a reductive agent, limiting one's identity and potential for diversity. Stephen Carter, in his book "Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby," suggests that such labels begin as problematic stereotypes, obscuring complexities and generating misleading social policies.

◆ Paradigm shift

Tribes and tribal societies in contemporary India are undergoing a paradigm shift due to their increasing exposure to development and related changes. This transition encompasses socio-cultural, economic, and lifestyle patterns. Tribal youth, as protagonists in this process, experience the greatest intensity of change. They reflect these changing dynamics in their personal and family lives, social relationships, health behaviors, lifestyles, and more.

◆ Transformative changes

Anthropologists conducting fieldwork among indigenous people have observed that most tribal groups value social solidarity, maximum freedom, minimal social burdens, and strong and open parent-child relationships. Both male and female youth in tribal societies lead modest lives. Therefore, it is crucial for anthropologists and other social scientists in the contemporary world to study, understand, and explain the status of tribal youth in relation to their participation and acceptance of development, modernisation, and related changes. In recent times, the economic renaissance in developing countries like India has brought substantial alterations to the socio-cultural patterns of all social structures, including tribal societies.

◆ Indigenous groups

In this process, different approaches are observable among tribal communities. Firstly, enlightened indigenous groups, mostly composed of young people, actively seek the establishment and recognition of their own language, culture, traditions, and religion within mainstream societies. Community leaders often support this movement for socio-cultural and political identity.



◆ Cultural recognition

The fundamental goal is to assert their own identity along with power, rights, and responsibilities. However, it is evident that the methods and paths toward achieving this goal are often borrowed from non-tribal and modern societies. The concept of the autonomous agent is a myth; each of us is constituted by the other, and we cannot deliberate or decide without implicating otherness

◆ New identity

On the other hand, in this social process, age-old patterns are either revitalised and reformed or new structures are given to cultural practices that can align with modern non-tribal societies. Interestingly, this renewal, renovation, and reformation of a new identity is built upon the same foundation that the new identity seeks to challenge. The struggle for a new and distinct identity is rooted in the existing structure against which it wants to make a stand.

◆ Reformation of traditional patterns

This raises the question of whether this new identity will truly preserve and promote indigenous culture or if it will lead to a pseudo/shadow form. Here few instances can be considered. Santal which is one of the populous tribes in India is at the forefront in this formulation process of new identity. It is a fact that Santal do not identify themselves as a part of any modern religions. The act of religious conversion in recent days is exception though it has become a new phenomenon in tribal areas.

3.3.3 Politicisation of Tribes

◆ Integration

The Politicisation of tribes involves the integration of tribal communities into the political process and the formation of political identities and movements based on tribal affiliations. This process has both positive and negative implications for tribal communities and the larger political landscape. The Politicisation of tribes can be understood as a response to historical marginalisation and the struggle for recognition, representation, and empowerment.

◆ Tribal affiliation

Tribal communities have often been marginalised and excluded from mainstream political processes, leading to the formation of their own political movements and organisations. These movements seek to address the specific needs, interests, and rights of tribal communities within the larger political context.

3.3.3.1 Tribes in the Colonial Political System

The tribal society has a long history of self-governance, its own conception of democracy, autonomy, and tribal

◆ Impact of colonial forces

lifeworld. It was structured around communitarian and egalitarian democratic values, thereby facilitating the tribal lifeworld. This was probably one of the most important reasons why tribal representatives in the Constituent Assembly, such as J. J. M. Nichols Roy and Jaipal Singh, apparently advocated a 'tribalised' form of democracy in post-colonial India. However, the arrival of foresters in India challenged their autonomy, patterns of governance, and notion of democracy by showing total disregard for their lifeworld. As a result, many tribal communities launched insurrections against the British. The colonial forces, however, responded with military means to suppress tribal revolts and brought them under a single political regime through coercion, war, and conquest. This authoritative integration of tribes into the mainstream political system not only undermined the tribal practice of democracy but also imposed new political settings that were previously alien to them. Consequently, tribal communities became part of the colonial political system.

◆ Disruption of Tribal autonomy

Due to the exclusionary nature of the colonial political system, Indians strongly demanded popular participation in the decision-making process to ensure adequate representation in the executive councils of the governor-general and the governors, as well as an expansion of the central and provincial councils. It is interesting to note that the British treated Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, the depressed classes, and the backward tribes as minorities. The protective frameworks enacted for these minorities included separate representation in legislatures and reserved quotas in public services, among other measures.

◆ Reservation and protection

The British introduced tribes to electoral politics for the first time under the Government of India (GOI) Act, 1935. While granting provincial autonomy to India in 1935, the British recognised the need for protecting 'depressed communities' through reserved seats in assemblies. As a result, the Act reserved a certain number of seats for different categories of people. Under the Fifth Schedule of the GOI Act, 1935, seats were reserved for Muslims, Christians, and Europeans in the provincial legislative councils.

Although there were no reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and backward tribes in the provincial legislative councils (Government of India Act, 1935), the provincial legislative assemblies had some seats reserved for them. The colonial pattern of representation led to a paradoxical



◆ Paradoxical Indian politics

situation in Indian politics. On the one hand, it appears that seat allotment to the backward tribes was influenced by the concentration of tribal communities in certain areas, such as the previous provinces of Bihar, Assam, and Odisha, where seven, nine, and five seats, respectively, were reserved for them under the GOI Act, 1935. On the other hand, the colonial pattern of proportional representation was far from reasonable. For instance, the backward tribes of the central provinces and Berar constituted as much as 20 percent of the population, but only one seat was reserved for them.

◆ Inappropriate Tribal representation

Similarly, only one seat each in the Madras and Bombay provincial legislative assemblies was allocated for the tribes. In the federal assembly, there was no reservation for backward tribes. While reservations for minorities accompanied every stage of the decision-making process, this was not the case for the tribes. The British considered the demonstrative capabilities of tribal communities as the basis for ensuring tribal representation in the decision-making processes. They developed a stereotypical approach towards tribal people, which was attributed to the non-availability of capable tribal people from some areas, such as Odisha, to represent them. In short, tribal communities were disproportionately represented in the political sphere during the colonial period.

3.3.3.2 Tribes in the Post-colonial Political System

◆ Act of negotiations

During the colonial period, neither the British nor the national leadership recognised tribal politics as a distinct political formation, thereby opening the window for the question of difference in post-colonial India. After independence, therefore, the Indian state began to negotiate with tribal communities as a distinct category. The negotiation process emerged through a discourse on what should be the basis of tribal political representation in India. The discourse revolved around the theoretical underpinning of representation and who should represent the tribes in post-colonial India.

◆ Representation rights

The Constituent Assembly deliberated on these critical questions as part of its mandate to draft the constitution for independent India. In the process, it considered the claims and demands of different competing social groups to protect and promote their interests. After a long and intense debate in the Constituent Assembly, it was resolved that only tribal people would be best suited to protect and promote

the rights and interests of their communities. As a result, various provisions for group representation were adopted in the constitution.

3.3.3.3 Constitutional Provisions and Political Reservation

◆ Quota system in democracy

Democratic rights have been extended to tribes by granting them equal citizenship status. Nonetheless, the framers of the Indian constitution realised that considering the history of social discrimination and marginalisation, a mere extension of citizenship rights to the indigenous people would not ensure their adequate representation in the political sphere. Hence, institutional mechanisms were developed to ensure their proper representation in democratic politics. Consequently, the Indian state adopted the 'quota system' for the Scheduled Tribes (STs), which involves reserved seats in politics in proportion to their numerical strength in the total population as per the latest preceding census.

◆ Proportionality

According to Article 330, seats shall be reserved for STs in the lower house of the Indian parliament (Lok Sabha). Under Article 332 of the Indian constitution, seats are reserved for STs in the legislative assembly of every state. The number of reserved seats is determined based on the principle of proportionality. The provision of electoral reservation addresses the discrimination arising from the exclusion of STs from formal political institutions, aiming to accommodate their differences within the political sphere.

◆ Inclusive representation

It not only seeks to broaden the base of Indian democratic politics by ensuring adequate representation of STs but also enables the establishment of an inclusive political system. Political reservation in India follows a 'joint electoral system,' where the opposing candidate must belong to the reserved category. However, the entire electorate, regardless of category, participates in the process of electing qualified candidates. As per the single-policy rule applicable to all states, Articles 330 and 332 of the Indian constitution provide for political reservation for STs in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, respectively.

◆ Contesting in elections

Nevertheless, the provision of political reservation does not restrict tribal individuals from contesting elections from unreserved seats. For example, in the 2009 general elections, 136 tribal candidates contested from unreserved constituencies, out of which six emerged victorious. Similarly, in the 2014 general election, six tribal candidates were



elected to the Lok Sabha from unreserved constituencies. However, electoral reservation has not been extended to the upper house of parliament (Rajya Sabha) and state assemblies (legislative councils) due to the different nature of representation.

- ◆ Ensuring Tribal representation

The Rajya Sabha was established to maintain center-state relations rather than accommodate diversities. Electoral reservation serves as an ad-hoc arrangement to ensure adequate tribal representation in formal political institutions. Initially, it was adopted for a duration of 10 years, with the rationale that the time frame would facilitate effective implementation of preferential considerations, making it easier to evaluate the impact after 10 years. However, in practice, the tenure of political reservation has consistently been extended since then.

- ◆ Article 334

It is worth mentioning that the time limit was specific to politics only (Article 334) and did not apply to other areas of reservation such as government employment and education. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that once political reservation ceases to exist, the parliament may easily amend the constitution and strike down the provision of reservation.

- ◆ Limited choices in tribal political representation

The hope and despair of tribal communities have been further affected by the ineffective performance of tribal political representatives in democratic politics for various reasons. Despair is also fueled by the relatively limited political choices for ST candidates to contest from reserved constituencies located outside their states. However, in recent times, it has been observed that candidates have started contesting elections in unreserved constituencies located outside their states by simultaneously contesting from two parliamentary constituencies under Section 33 of the Representation of People Act, 1951, one within their own state and the other outside it. The relatively restricted political choices for ST candidates can perhaps be explained by the fact that the ST lists are state-specific, and STs cannot claim the reserved status outside their states.

Summarised Overview

Tribes in India have undergone significant transformation, leading to causes and consequences that have shaped their political landscape. Historically, tribal societies in India were characterised by self-governance, autonomy, and communitarian democratic values. However, during the colonial period, the British challenged their autonomy and democratic practices, resulting in tribal uprisings and eventual integration into the colonial political system. After India gained independence, the recognition of tribal communities as a distinct category prompted the Indian state to address their social discrimination and marginalisation. While extending democratic rights and equal citizenship status to tribes was important, it was realized that additional measures were needed to ensure their adequate representation in the political sphere. To achieve this, institutional mechanisms were developed, including the adoption of a quota system for Scheduled Tribes (STs). The quota system, implemented through reserved seats in politics, aimed to provide proportional representation for STs based on their numerical strength in the population. Article 330 of the Indian constitution reserved seats for STs in the lower house of parliament (Lok Sabha), and Article 332 reserved seats for STs in the legislative assembly of every state. This electoral reservation sought to address discrimination and accommodate tribal differences within the political sphere, ultimately widening the base of Indian democratic politics and fostering inclusivity.

In the joint electoral system employed in India, opposing candidates in reserved seats must belong to the reserved category, while the entire electorate participates in the process of electing qualified candidates. However, political reservation has not been extended to the upper house of parliament (Rajya Sabha) or state legislative councils, as their representation serves different purposes related to center-state relations rather than accommodating diversities. Although the provision of political reservation offers opportunities for tribal political representation, challenges persist. The performance of tribal political representatives has been criticised for its ineffectiveness, and limited political choices are available for ST candidates contesting from reserved constituencies located outside their states. Some ST candidates have resorted to contesting from both reserved and unreserved constituencies to expand their political choices. While the quota system was initially introduced for a limited period, it has been continuously extended due to its perceived effectiveness. It is worth noting that the time limit applied specifically to politics and did not affect other reservation spheres such as government employment and education. This suggests that if political reservation were to cease, the provision could potentially be amended or removed.



Assignments

1. Discuss the causes that have led to the transformation of tribes in India. How the factors such as globalisation and socio-economic changes have influenced tribal communities?
2. Analyse the consequences of the transformation of tribes in India. How have changes in their cultural practices, social structures, and traditional livelihoods impacted their communities? Discuss the challenges they face in preserving their identity and heritage.
3. Evaluate the process of Politicisation of tribes in India. How did the colonial period shape the political identity of tribal communities?
4. Discuss the challenges they faced in attaining adequate political representation and the measures taken by the Indian state to address their concerns.
5. How did the colonial integration of tribes into the mainstream political system impact their autonomy and democratic practices?
6. What are the institutional mechanisms developed in post-colonial India to ensure adequate political representation for tribal communities?
7. Explain the significance of the quota system and reserved seats in politics for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India.
8. What are the challenges faced by tribal political representatives and how do they impact the effectiveness of tribal representation in democratic politics?

Suggested Readings

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Aspects of Politics in Contemporary Indian Society

BLOCK-04





Movement and Ideologies

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain the rise of Indian nationalism
- ◆ identify the hurdles of national integration
- ◆ examine communalism and secularism in India
- ◆ know about regionalism and ethnic identities in India

Background

Imagine a lively cricket stadium, packed with enthusiastic fans waving flags, wearing their national colours, and cheering for their team. In this electrifying atmosphere, we witness the power of nationalism. Nationalism is like a unifying force that brings people together, transcending differences and creating a strong sense of belonging and pride in one's nation. Likewise, imagine a diverse neighbourhood with different religious and ethnic communities living side by side. Each community has its own places of worship, cultural practices, and traditions. In an ideal scenario, these communities would coexist peacefully, sharing their customs and celebrating their differences. This situation represents secularism, where multiple religious, cultural, and philosophical perspectives coexist harmoniously, promoting tolerance, respect, and equality for all. However, communalism creates divisions and tensions among these communities. Instead of embracing diversity and promoting harmony, communalism erects invisible barriers, leading to mistrust and conflicts.

In the diverse neighbourhood, each community represents a different region within a country. Each region has its unique cultural identity, language, customs, and traditions. The distinctiveness of each region is celebrated, fostering a sense of regionalism. Now visualize a vibrant tapestry woven with threads of different colours and patterns, each representing a unique ethnic group. This tapestry represents ethnicity, embracing the richness of cultural, linguistic, and ancestral characteristics that define a group of people.



In short, Nationalism fosters a sense of belonging to a nation, secularism promotes diversity and equality, communalism represents divisions among communities, regionalism celebrates the unique identities of different regions, and ethnicity embraces the diversity of cultural heritage. These concepts shape our societies and deeply influence our lives, beliefs, and interactions with others.

Keywords

Sovereign, National integrity, Ethnic identity, Multilingualism

Discussion

4.1.1 Nationalism

- ◆ Unique government and sovereign rights

Nationalism is a political ideology that emphasises the unity of a country and state. It is used to describe both a political philosophy and any collective action undertaken by political and social movements on behalf of nations. Philosophically, nationalism is a philosophy that justifies a group of people having their own unique government and exercising their full sovereign rights. On the basis of a citizen's feelings towards a country or nation, it can be defined as a sentiment, loyalty, or sympathy that unites a group of people via shared institutions and culture.

- ◆ Specific ways of displaying national pride

Nationalism has a meaning in addition to being an ideology. It can be interpreted to refer to a specific means or ways of displaying national pride and can also be defined as the whole of the populace's goals in terms of social, political, and national matters. In this sense, a nation's nationalism would be the beliefs dictating its way of life and conduct.

- ◆ Nationalism and patriotism

Nationalism is sometimes interpreted in terms of national pride, so there is a possibility of it being misinterpreted as the meaning of patriotism. Nationalism and patriotism are two concepts that have been combined and amplified on an emotional level in modern society. "The concept of nationalism is a state of mind wherein the individual feels that their ultimate devotion is owed to the nation state." Wherein "patriotism" is a term used to describe loyalty to



a particular location and includes both societal conditioning and individual beliefs. See how nationalism and patriotism differ from each other. Then what was the components of the ideology of nationalism?

◆ Basic element

Let's check the component of nationalism. The essence of nationalism is that it unites the Indian people and generates their love for their country. It asserts that each country ought to govern its own affairs free from outside interference. The country should have independent, self-governing entities. All citizens, regardless of gender, class, caste, or religion, are seen in nationalism. Common race, language, religion, traditions, history, geography, and other aspects are all fundamental components of nationalism, but none of these components alone can give rise to a nation or nationalism. For instance, racial and linguistic variables influence the development of nationalism, but they are not quite essential. In India, there are twenty-two official languages, and several communities contribute to the Indian nationality; however, there is a limited chance of belongingness and national feeling on the basis of one language and ethnicity. However, sharing a common language would expose shared customs and perspectives, strengthening the connection between the populations. The political, economic, and social history in each nation, as well as the struggle for a national social existence, all influenced the formation of nationalism in different nations.

4.1.1.1 The Rise of Indian Nationalism

◆ Root cause of Indian nationalism

From the perspective of a general study of nationalism, the investigation into the emergence and development of Indian nationalism is of enormous significance. The development of Indian nationalism has been a complex and multifaceted process, influenced by several causes. Firstly, the social structure of pre-British Indian society was highly distinctive. Secondly, its economic foundation was distinctly separate from that of the pre-capitalist medieval societies of European nations. Thirdly, India was a vast nation with a sizable population that spoke numerous languages and practised various religions. The unique social, economic, political, and religious history of India, along with its extensive territory and dense population, make it both challenging and intriguing to examine the emergence and development of Indian nationalism. Nationalism in India is a modern phenomenon. It was created during the British era as a result of the action and interaction of various forces and elements that emerged within Indian society as a result of British rule and the influence of other forces.

◆ Political suppression

During the colonial period, the primary objective of the state power maintained by Britain in India was to advance and protect British interests. British interests served as the driving force behind the British invasion of India and their subsequent reign. After the colonial repression, the Indian people were dissatisfied with British rule. Additionally, the Indian people as a whole rejected British control as it hindered their social, economic, and cultural growth. The movement and interaction of multiple subjective and objective factors and circumstances that emerged within Indian society during the British period, as well as the influence of powerful integration, resulted in the emergence of Indian nationalism. Moreover, they desired political influence to fight against injustices such as racial discrimination and other disabilities. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Indian nationalism began to take organised forms.

◆ Social reformers

The social and religious reform movements of the 19th century also contributed to a feeling of nationalism. The emergence of the Brahma Samaj in 1828 reflected the increasing national consciousness among the sophisticated Hindu intelligentsia. Do you recall reading about people like Annie Besant, Swami Vivekananda, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and Aurobindo Ghosh speaking out against the intellectual and spiritual aspects of nationalism? They had been exposed to Western democratic principles through the education that Britain had introduced in India. Along with the invention of the printing press, it facilitated the widespread dissemination of concepts like liberty, equality, and fraternity. All of these elements contributed to the rise of nationalism among Indians.

◆ Efforts of national leaders

The Indian National Congress helps create an urge among Indians to become politically conscious for their betterment. The leaders, like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dada Bhai Naoroji, Ras Behari Bose, Badruddin Tayabji, etc., fought for national freedom. Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and Bipin Chandra Pal (Lal-Bal-Pal) their presence marked the beginning of a new pattern and a face of India's freedom fight. They criticising British government policies, boycotting foreign goods, using Swadeshi (homemade) products, etc. They thought that freedom was their birthright and did not think that they should be at the mercy of the British. Gandhi's 1942 "Quit India Movement" campaign, a civil disobedience effort to accelerate India's approaching independence, was another notable Satyagraha campaign. Gandhi fought for Indian freedom from British oppression



using a traditional and non-violent approach. On August 15, 1947, this resulted in our long-awaited independence. Not only Gandhi Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose were eminent figures of national movements.

◆ Gandhian approach

Gandhi rejects the widespread belief that “India has become a nation under the British rule” and bases his assertion that India is a nation on two presumptions of an all-India consciousness. Gandhi promotes religious diversity and the freedom of each religion to freely express and practise whatever they see as the truth. For Gandhi, nationalism entails community self-rule, and it also emphasises social change through the attainment of swaraj, which establishes a strong connection between freedom and social harmony.

◆ Secular-nationalism

Let’s check how did these religion-national concerns affect the establishment and institutionalisation of the new Indian state under Jawaharlal Nehru after India was freed from the British Empire? Although Nehru was not anti-religious, he was mindful of the potential harm that religion may cause to India. He lost not much time in integrating the secular ideal into the Constitution. While not forbidden in public life, religion was kept apart from the state. Without a doubt, our country is secular by law and by constitution.

4.1.2 Secularism

◆ Religious neutrality

Above, we discussed that after independence, India was formed as a secular state. Let’s define secularism first. The term “secularism” is used to characterise ideologies that support a social order distinct from religion without explicitly ignoring or condemning religious belief. Sociologically, it refers to the view that civilisation has advanced irreversibly from a state of primitive fear through periods of animism, polytheism, pantheism, and monotheism to a fully scientific age in which religion will be of no further relevance to humankind. It simply refers to sociocultural processes that widen the range of intellectual, institutional, and material spheres of life where the influence of religion is progressively diminished.

◆ Dispassionate view

When the words “secular” and “religious” are used interchangeably, it can give the impression that secularism is in opposition to religion. But in practice, secularism adopts a neutral stance while managing the operations of the state rather than being opposed to religion. In India, it essentially means treating people of all religions equally and banning any form of discrimination. Therefore, secularism entails treating religion as a strictly personal affair and separating the

state, politics, and non-religious aspects of life from religion. When India is described as a “secular state,” it simply implies that it will not identify itself with any particular religious belief, and no one will suffer any discrimination or prejudice because of their religion.

4.1.2.1 Secularism in Indian History

◆ Religious diversity

India has a long history filled with many secular traditions. Indian culture is a synthesis, incorporating several spiritual traditions and social movements. By accepting many spiritual traditions and seeking to assimilate them into one mainstream, Hinduism was essentially given the opportunity to develop into a comprehensive religion in ancient India. Even after the arrival of Jainism, Buddhism, and eventually Islam and Christianity on Indian soil, the practice of religious tolerance and coexistence of various faiths persisted.

◆ Reformist dogmas

The Indian freedom movement also reinforced and upheld the spirit of secularism. Freedom fighters and reformers like Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale largely adopted a secular political philosophy during the early stages of the Indian freedom struggle. The Arya Samaj, led by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Sri Raja Ram Mohan Roy, have never shown any hostility toward other religious beliefs. Instead, they aimed to eliminate the misguided traditions that had gradually weakened Hinduism’s vitality.

◆ Ideologies of ideal state

Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were the main proponents of the secular ideology in contemporary India. Gandhi’s secularism was founded on his dedication to the brotherhood of religious communities, upholding and seeking after the truth. The idea of a secular state was actively promoted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who is widely acknowledged for establishing India as a secular state. He was particularly interested in transforming India from a “caste-ridden society,” where communalism posed a serious threat to the ideals he cherished, into a “national state” that embraces people of all religions and political ideologies.

4.1.2.2 Constitutional Safeguards: Nature of Secular Nation

The Indian Constitution upholds the political notion that all religions are equally valid and worthy of respect,



◆ Encourage religious tolerance

and it supports the idea that public discourse on issues of public policy and public education should be free of any expression of religion. This notion was expressed during the drafting of the Constitution before independence. The Nehru Committee's provision on secularism in 1928, the first major draft of Indian constitution, stated that "there shall be no state religion for the commonwealth of India or for any province in the commonwealth, nor shall the state, either directly or indirectly, endow any religion with any preference or impose any disability on account of religious beliefs or religious status." Although the Indian Constitution stipulates that both the state and religion maintain a proper distance from one another, the state has the full authority to mediate and even control religious disputes if they arise. Essentially, the Indian state does not oppose any particular religion or claim it as its own. It stands for religious freedom and tolerance in the broadest sense.

◆ Secularist constitution

The 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976 modified the preamble of the constitution; since then, India has been a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. The preamble of the Indian Constitution incorporates the "secularist ideology." According to the constitution, India shall not have a "state religion." The state will neither establish its own religion nor grant any particular religion, special status. Article 25 guarantees the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate one's religion. Everyone has an equal right to freedom of conscience and the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, and health, as well as other requirements of this part. Article 26 of the Indian Constitution states that "Every religious denomination or any section thereof shall have the right to manage its religious affairs, subject to public order, morality, and health." Article 27 guarantees the freedom from paying taxes for the maintenance or promotion of any particular religion or religious denominations. "No person shall be compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion." Article 28 provides for freedom of attendance at religious instruction or worship in certain educational institutions. No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained by out-of-state funds.

Currently, in the context of India, the core principle of secularist ideologies is the separation of religion from the state. In the present political realities on the ground, the term

◆ Secularist state

“secular” connotes tolerance for diverse religious beliefs in India. In a secular state, no one enjoys special advantages in national life or international relations based on their religion. Every citizen in a secular state is free to choose their own religion or reject adherence to any religion altogether. The right to conscience is not subject to interference by the state. The relationship between the state and the individual is determined objectively in accordance with constitutional provisions. Therefore, religion has minimal ability to influence such a social relationship. Both the state and religion have the freedom to implement their own norms. No group has the right to claim privileges and rights that they deny to others.

4.1.3 Communalism

◆ Rise of communalism in India

In the Indian context, communalism refers to interreligious conflicts that involve hostility, suspicion, and mutual prejudice, often leading to violence. The relationship between Hindus and Muslims is a significant concern in India. The inhumane behaviour witnessed during various communal riots in India is unparalleled in its severity. As a philosophy or worldview, communalism is a legacy of colonial authority in India. A lot of inter-sect, inter-cult, or religious conflicts and violence has occurred in the past. They were not, however, communal in the way that term started to be used in the middle of the nineteenth century. India’s communalism was largely a result of colonial policy towards various communities, particularly after the revolt of 1857. The difficulties colonial leaders faced in the second half of the nineteenth century led them to create policies that supported communalism. There may be several factors that contributed to the growth of communalism in India. Britishers’ policy of “division and rule to weaken harmony between the Hindus and Muslims, similarly, the partition of India in the name of religion also threatens the national integrity. The thought of unequal treatment in terms of religion tends to lead to conflict or violence between people from different religious or cult groups.

Most likely, communal violence often arises when members of two different religious communities develop animosity, emotional rage, and a sense of exploitation, social prejudice, and neglect towards each other. This friction and polarization contribute to a strong sense of community within each group, leading to attacks targeting members of the opposing community. Typically, communal riots lack



◆ Communal violence

effective leadership capable of managing and containing the situation. Thus, resentment, anger, and revenge are significant driving forces behind such acts of violence. Since politics became communalized, there has been a noticeable increase in both the intensity and frequency of communal violence. This trend has now become deeply ingrained in Indian politics, leading to various manifestations of casteism, religious fanaticism, and the intertwining of politics and religion.

4.1.3.1 Dimensions of Communalism in India

◆ Miscellaneous forms of communalism

There are six dimensions of communalism: welfarist, retreatist, retaliatory, separatist, assimilationist, and secessionist. Assimilationist communalism involves incorporating small religious groups into larger religious communities. For example, the Hindu Marriage Act should be applied to scheduled tribes, as well as Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist communities. Welfare communalism aims to improve the well-being of a particular community by raising living standards and providing access to education and wealth. This form of communalism focuses on mobilising resources for the benefit of one's own community. On the other hand, retreatist communalism entails a small religious group isolating itself from politics. For instance, the Bhai community prohibits its members from engaging in political activities. Retaliatory communalism involves attempts to harm or injure members of other religious communities as a response. Hindu-Muslim riots serve as an example of this form of communalism. Separatist communalism refers to a religious or cultural community demanding a separate territorial state within the nation to preserve its cultural identity. This can be seen among groups such as the Mizo and Naga people in northeast India, the Bodo people in Assam, and the tribal people of Jharkhand in Bihar. Lastly, secessionist communalism involves a religious group desiring an independent state to establish its distinct political identity. Some examples include militant Sikhs advocating for Khalistan and certain Muslim militants seeking an independent Kashmir. The latter three dimensions often lead to agitations, riots, acts of terrorism, and insurgency.

4.1.4 Regionalism

The history of Indian regionalism can be traced back to factors such as cultural heritage, geographical isolation, and ethnic affiliations. Regional identity has been a subject of contention in Indian democratic politics, sometimes

◆ Attachment to one's own region

coexisting with, but often competing against national identity. It is essential to analyse the social and cultural influences that have shaped this regional identity. Regionalism refers to a sense of love and attachment towards people from one's own region, as well as a disdain for those from other regions. The term increasingly encompasses various factors typically considered peripheral, polarised towards nationalism and centralism, among others. On the other hand, regionalism describes one's perspective and emotions towards a specific region. It can be seen as a form of resistance against the dominance of a particular cultural ideology associated with national integration.

◆ Positive and negative consequences

Regionalism has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, it represents the aspirations of a particular area for development and fulfilment. However, regionalism can also reveal a psychological sense of relative deprivation among a population. This feeling of deprivation is often exploited by negative forces to evoke strong emotions among the locals and promote regionalist ideologies. In India, with its rich cultural diversity, regional areas articulate a distinct regional identity, which they subsequently utilise to strengthen their own political positions.

◆ Multi cultural variance

The socio-cultural characteristics of a region are considered the core of social cohesion due to various reasons. According to this perspective, a specific area distinguishes itself by accumulating unique attributes over time, influenced by diverse factors that operate with varying degrees of significance. These factors include geography, religion, language, customs, social, economic, and political developments, as well as shared historical traditions and experiences. The term "regional identity" should be understood as a comprehensive representation of the diversity within Indian society, as different regions in India possess distinct social, cultural, historical, linguistic, economic, and political significance. Language and cultural differences play a crucial role in the emergence of regionalism. When language and culture are appropriately politicised, they contribute significantly to the formation of regions and serve as the foundation of individual identities.

India's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity are the primary drivers behind the rise of regionalism in the country. Federalism has been recognised as the foundation of India's democratic system as it enables regional social groups, including ethnic, linguistic, tribal, and cultural communities,



- ◆ Federal democratic system

to access resources and fulfil their demands for recognition. The interplay between centralization and decentralization, as well as the appropriate distribution of administrative power between the central government and the states, are significant aspects of the discourse on regionalism.

4.1.4.1 Movement and Debate on Regionalism

- ◆ Historic lineage

Deeply ingrained in India's land and history are the attachments to one's own region, language, culture, and other societal loyalties. Basically, India was divided into regions that each had various degrees of autonomy before becoming independent. British authorities reorganised these areas for colonial exploitation. However, there were two ways that privileged groups within society responded to British colonialism. For their upward mobility, they, on the one hand, adopted colonial modernism. They questioned the colonial assault on their land, though. Even after India was formed, regional culture continued to evolve. However, the British government's various actions had sown and maintained regional sentiments.

- ◆ Multi-linguistic state

In the early 1950s, aspirations for a linguistic reorganisation of the states in order to unite the major linguistic groupings into separate states were a prominent political expression of regionalism. Political parties and organisations representing these linguistic groups demanded the redrawing of state borders. Language, it is argued, plays a crucial role in shaping claims and conflicts surrounding knowledge. The main cause of this language-based regionalism is believed to be the perceived unequal allocation of limited resources among various social and cultural sub-regions. The State Reorganisation Committee was established by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, after independence and underwent modifications in 1956. The committee's recommendations led to the adoption of the three-language formula under the Official Language Act of 1963, based on the advice of the official language committee led by B.G. Kher. However, the official promotion of Hindi in Tamil Nadu triggered large-scale riots and a series of self-immolations that persisted until early 1965. As a result, the Official Language Amendment Act of 1967 was introduced as a compromise by the government. According to this amendment, Hindi became the language of communication between the central government and the Hindi-speaking states, while English remained the medium of communication between the central government and the

non-Hindi-speaking states. In practice, English continues to be the primary means of elite communication throughout the nation.

◆ Ethnic movement

Jharkhand's demand for independence exemplifies the ups and downs of Indian regionalism politics. The establishment of a distinct "Adivasi state" was the primary goal of the Jharkhand agitation. Before independence, it gained prominence. However, after independence, the movement shifted its focus from ethnicity to regionalism. They asserted that they belong to socially marginalised groups that are denied access to resources. However, because Jharkhand is often depicted as a relatively poor and underdeveloped state, the politics of development and resource distribution continue to significantly impact the socioeconomic structures there. It took nearly fifteen years to grant Jharkhand statehood. Birsa Munda, a respected tribal warrior in this region, was born on November 15, 1875, and is commemorated as the state's birth anniversary.

◆ Linguistic movement

Based on the ideas of the State Reorganisation Commission, which defined boundaries based on linguistic origin, the Telangana movement for independence began in 1969. It is noteworthy that the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh shares a common language. The relatively poor economy of Telangana, compared to other regions of Andhra Pradesh, concerns the local population. The demand for Telangana statehood also had an impact on other political parties. The Srikrishna Committee on Telangana submitted a report to the Indian Home Ministry on December 30, 2010, indicating that the Indian government would initiate the process of creating a separate Telangana state. The state of Telangana was formally established on June 2, 2014.

◆ Forms of Regionalism

When a group of states forges an identity against another group of states or even the union, supra-state regionalism is formed. For example, North-South issues highlight this phenomenon. State borders often align with interstate regionalism, where the identities of individual states or groups of states come into conflict on specific issues. One such example is the river water dispute between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In terms of regions within the same state, intra-state regionalism manifests as a perception of exploitation or deprivation. This phenomenon is also referred to as "sub-regionalism." Regionalism has sparked numerous movements, such as the Dravidian and Jharkhand movements.



4.1.5 Ethnicity

◆ Ethnic identity

Regionism and ethnicity are basically inextricably linked. Ethnicity is a sense of awareness of these common qualities among the members of an ethnic group is a vital component of ethnicity. It involves mobilising individuals around a shared point of reference to present a unified front and express their socio-economic or political concerns. “Ethnic origin” refers to either growing up within a specific ethnic group or having genuine or imagined ancestors belonging to that group. Ethnic identity can be described as an individual’s psychological positioning in relation to one or more social systems based on their ethnic origin and how they perceive others positioning them in reference to those systems.

◆ India’s multi-ethnic variation

Geographically, in a nation like India, the phenomenon of ethnicity has evolved into an integral part of the socio-political realities of multiple cultural or multi-ethnic communities. India has served as a bridge between various ethnic groups, including linguistic communities (Konkanis, Dravidians, etc.) and caste-based ethnic groups (Nagas, Mundas, Kuravas, etc.). As a result, there exists a pan-Indian culture alongside distinct regional, local, and ethnic cultures, which can be referred to as “great and little traditions.” However, the excesses of Modernisation and the homogenizing trend of modern states have also led to ethnic upsurges and cultural assertions in India. The main causes of ethnic conflicts include multi-ethnicity, uneven economic development, caste politics, insecurities among linguistic and religious minorities, and the alienation of tribes.

◆ Causes of Indian ethnic upsurges

1. India is distinguished by its highly diverse population, comprising numerous castes and various religious, linguistic, cultural, and racial groups. The intense competition for limited economic resources and the increasing awareness among individuals from different groups to preserve their respective cultures make India susceptible to claims of ethnic identities. 2. Imbalanced economic growth has led to certain groups feeling neglected and excluded from the development process. Consequently, they become highly vulnerable to ethnic politics. 3. India operates under a representative parliamentary democracy, where various castes, religious groups, and linguistic communities compete for political power by emphasising horizontal cooperation and the consolidation of shared interests. 4. Political leaders often exploit caste and religious identities to mobilise

people for their personal agendas and narrow political gains. 5. Linguistic and religious minorities are concerned about assimilation into the mainstream culture, which could result in the loss of their own cultural identity. 6. Tribes in India experience a profound sense of alienation due to poor development policies that have displaced them from their ancestral lands and forests, pushing them into extreme poverty and destitution.

◆ Tribal movement

India has witnessed tribal ethnic movements throughout its history. During the British era, tribes were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands, leading to frequent revolts against authorities, landlords, and moneylenders. Even in independent India, tribes receive the least attention and face disaffection due to their lack of development and displacement from their ancestral lands and forests. As a result, tribal identity movements have resurfaced in various parts of the country. A significant aspect is the “ethno-ecological movement,” in which tribes not only resist displacement but also fight against the ecological devastation of their natural habitats. The direct consequence of their oppression, displacement, poverty, and cultural erosion by the dominant mainstream culture is the growing threat of Maoist violence in India, commonly known as Naxalism, in regions predominantly inhabited by tribes. In these areas, tribes engage in armed rebellion against the state.

◆ State response

The Indian constitution protects and recognises ethnic diversity, ensuring that ethnicity does not impede the political, social, economic, or cultural advancement of the nation’s citizens. Provisions like universal adult franchises enable people to participate in a wide range of social and economic activities, regardless of their caste, colour, or language. The state has also adopted a reformist approach and intervenes to improve the conditions of minorities and disadvantaged segments of society. The Indian Constitution guarantees the protection of ethnic minorities through Article 29, which safeguards their interests. Section 29(1) ensures the right of any group of Indian citizens to speak a different language, possess a distinct culture, or use a unique script to preserve their identity. Article 30 grants minorities the right to establish and manage educational institutions of their choice, irrespective of their religious or linguistic background.

4.1.6 Continuity and Change: Tradition and Modernity

- ◆ Influence of British era

In India's history, modernisation began with the foundation of British rule and persisted even after independence. In the beginning, contact with the British led to the development of a modernising subculture, or "Little Westernisation Tradition." Contact with the West resulted in significant modifications to social institutions and cultural practices. Industrialization, urbanisation, transportation and communication, the military, the rise of the industrial working class, and other modernising developments were all taking place.

- ◆ Introduction of bureaucratic administration

Almost every significant political aspect of existence underwent change. In the areas of law, agriculture, education, and administration, new arrangements were made by the British government. For the most part, this resulted in structural upgrading. For instance, they substituted the traditional Indian legal standards, founded on the idea of hierarchy and ascription, with a bureaucratic system of administration and justice that was based on contemporary rational norms.

- ◆ Decentralisation

After the parliamentary system of governance based on adult franchise was adopted, the political system took on a new shape. Political parties have grown to be significant components of the system. Therefore, the democratic political system has successfully contributed to a rise in political consciousness among the populace. The Panchayat Raj institutions have further expedited the politicisation trend. Development of Communities In addition to the establishment of land reforms and elected village panchayats, projects have brought modern cultural norms and role structures to every village in India. This has exposed the villagers to a bureaucratic kind of participation in local-level management and judicial administration.

The structural changes that India underwent throughout the postcolonial phase of Modernisation also had inconsistencies. Traditional characteristics have been preserved in microstructures like caste, family, and village communities. With contemporary institutions like democratic representation, political party structure, and trade unionism, caste has shown unexpected elasticity and latent ability for adaptation, and it still exists today. Joint family ties and particularistic standards are still prevalent.

- ◆ Inconsistencies in structural changes



However, at the level of macrostructures, such as the political system, bureaucracy, elite structure, industry, and economy, these tensions are further intensified. As a result, major potential sources of failure in the modernisation process in India may, in one way or another, be ascribed to structural inconsistencies, such as: Democratisation without the dissemination of civic education and bureaucratisation without adherence to universalist standards.

Summarised Overview

The unification of India emerged as a paramount concern following independence. The term “India” encompasses multiple ethnic and cultural regions within a specific geographical area. In this context, achieving national integration becomes imperative. It was important to ensure that all endeavours were conducted democratically. Any internal divisions based on geography or religion were condemned in the pursuit of national integration. National unity has been a shared goal of the nationalist movement and the subsequent efforts to foster cohesion and consolidation after independence. However, challenges such as linguistic diversity and religious differences have posed threats to the country’s unity. The issue of national integration encompasses multiple dimensions beyond political aspects, including the need for economic, social, and cultural integration.

Assignments

1. Critically examine: “The Preamble to the Constitution asserts that India is a secular nation.”
2. Describe the term “ethnicity” and identify the problems of ethnic groups in India.
3. Write a note on regionalism and regional movement in India.
4. Discuss the rise of Indian nationalism.
5. Compare secularism and communalism in India.
6. Discuss the hurdles of Indian nationalism and national integration

Suggested Readings

1. Guichard, S. (2010). *The Construction of History and Nationalism in India: Text-books, Controversies and Politics*. UK: Taylor & Francis.
2. Birch, A. H. (2017). *Nationalism and National Integration*. UK: Taylor & Francis.
3. Godbole, M. (2016). *Secularism: India at a Crossroads*. India: Rupa.
4. Gellner, E. (2008). *Nations and Nationalism*. UK: Cornell University Press.

References

1. Chandra, B. (1966). *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: Economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880-1905*. India: People's Publishing House.
2. Mishra, R. N. (1984). *Regionalism and State Politics in India*. India: Ashish.
3. Chandra, B. (1993). *Communalism in Modern India*. India: Vikas Publishing House.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.





Positive Discrimination in India

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ identify the characteristics of scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and other backward classes
- ♦ examine the constitutional provisions for SC/ST/OBC communities
- ♦ analyse the upliftment policies and programmes for SC/ST/OBC in Indian society

Background

India's history has been marked by a long-standing issue of oppression, suppression, and inequality. Throughout different periods, such as British rule, the monarchy, and the Puranic era, discrimination has persisted, fueled by the belief in a caste- and varna-based societal hierarchy. This system has relegated the lower class to a position of deprivation, denying them their basic human rights. Education, wages, housing, and social status have all been dictated by the desires of the privileged upper classes, subjecting the lower classes to immense suffering. These marginalised communities have endured exploitation for generations, while the more influential segments of society have actively silenced their struggles. In a society divided along caste lines, the upper castes have held significant power, often acting against the interests of the lower social classes. With no representation or mechanisms for dispute resolution, the lower castes have been compelled to serve the upper castes, perpetuating an inhumane and savage state that persisted for generations. It was only when "we the people" collectively recognised this injustice that our founding fathers began to address the systemic flaws that had plagued our nation.

In any democratic society, there exists a delicate balance between two opposing political ideologies: social justice and equality before the law. India, in its pursuit of social justice, acknowledged the urgent need to address centuries of social segregation perpetuated by the caste system. Constitutional safeguards were established, including reservation policies and quotas in jobs, educational institutions, and legislative bodies. Additionally, the government has provided aid, loans, and developmental assistance to uplift underprivileged sections of society. Thus, four underprivileged communities—Scheduled Castes (SCs) and



Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), religious minorities or subgroups thereof, and most recently, women—have either received benefits under the scheme or have been pursuing such advantages.

Keywords

Dalit, Adivasis, Minority, Creamy layer, Protective discriminations

Discussion

- ◆ Caste system in India.

In Block 3, you learned about the structure of the caste system in India and its features, including the discrimination against lower castes in India. In terms of complexity, elaboration, and rigidity, caste is seen as “an essentially Indian phenomenon” that is unmatched by any other institution. In order of hierarchy, they are the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and Harijans. The true “castes,” or Jatis, exist under each of these classifications. The persistence of superiority and inferiority based on one’s race, religion, economic background, and social standing is a global phenomenon. From this unit, you can understand the efforts of the Indian government to ensure equality and justice for the lower caste groups against caste discrimination.

- ◆ Protective discrimination

The founders of the Indian Constitution envisioned a society in which everyone is treated equally, regardless of their race, gender, caste, or colour. To effectively work towards achieving this goal, the Constitution’s makers utilised their judicial thinking. They employed a remarkable socioeconomic strategy that gained depth with the concept of protective discrimination. Protective discrimination involves granting special privileges to the disadvantaged and underprivileged segments of society. This policy aims to ensure social justice in society. The Constitution strives to improve the lives of the most exploited and disadvantaged groups in Indian society by granting them specific advantages. These groups include women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other underprivileged classes, and women.

The Indian Constitution includes specific provisions to address the needs of underprivileged groups, such as the



◆ Constitutional safeguards and provisions

Scheduled Tribes (STs), Scheduled Castes (SCs), and other backward classes, with the aim of creating a more egalitarian society. These provisions allow for positive discrimination as outlined in Article 15(4), which states that the State can make special provisions for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes, as well as the SCs and STs. Article 15(1) ensures that no citizen shall be discriminated against based on religion, race, caste, or other characteristics. Moreover, Article 16(1) guarantees equal opportunities in employment and appointment to any office under the state for all citizens. The Constitution encompasses several articles, including 16(4), 19(5), 29(1), 46, 244(1), 275, 322(1), 334, 335, 338(1), 339(1), 341(1), 342(1), etc., which address positive discrimination. Here are a few constitutional clauses that pertain to positive discrimination:

Article 17: Prohibition of the practice of “untouchability” in any form, which is deemed a criminal offence.

Article 46: Promotion of the economic and educational interests of SCs, STs, and other weaker sections of society.

Articles 16 and 335: Provision of preferential treatment in matters of employment in public services.

Articles 330 and 332: Reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) and State Assemblies.

4.2.1 Scheduled Caste

◆ Terminology of scheduled caste

Scheduled caste is a legal political term. During the colonial era, terms like “untouchables,” “outside classes,” and “depressed classes” were commonly used to refer to the scheduled castes. Mahatma Gandhi, referred to them as “Harijans,” meaning the people of God. Dr. Ambedkar used the phrase “depressed classes” to describe groups of people who were exploited, destitute, and socially, or religiously deprived. They were regarded as social outcasts or impure. The term “Dalit” is currently popular in use. The term “Dalit” is comprehensive in that it refers to untouchables or scheduled castes generally as well as other communities of people who are marginalised and oppressed. The idea of scheduling the castes was first introduced by the Simon Commission in 1927. The term “scheduled castes” gained popularity after the implementation of the 1935 Government of India Act.

The scheduled castes had their own distinct cultures and were not a homogeneous group but rather consisted

◆ Social constraints

of various subgroups organised in a hierarchical manner. They faced severe restrictions in their daily lives, including being barred from entering temples, public bathing areas, wells, and other places. They were also deprived of many civic rights due to caste and ritual-based restrictions. They continued to face numerous penalties and obstacles aimed at maintaining their inferior status.

◆ Constitutional provision

Ambedkar was a prominent figure in the struggle to protect the rights and dignity of the Scheduled Caste. Along with others, he promoted the rights of the Scheduled Caste. A number of reforms were implemented during India's independence to end untouchability's discriminatory practices. In order to enhance social and economic conditions and uphold equality and freedom in society, the Indian Constitution provides several safeguards and privileges for the scheduled castes. Article 340 empowers the President to establish a commission that examines the challenges faced by socially and economically disadvantaged classes, offering recommendations to address these issues. Article 17 mandates the complete elimination of untouchability in any form against the scheduled castes. Additionally, Articles 330 and 332 ensure the reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures based on the population of scheduled castes in each state. These constitutional provisions aim to rectify historical injustices and promote inclusivity in India's caste system.

◆ Reservation policies

The reservation policy is another measure to assist Scheduled Castes in rising to the level of other members of society within a set period of time. There are three main parts to the reservation policy. 1) Reservations for government positions; 2) Restrictions on entry to educational institutions; and 3) Restrictions on seats in the Lok Sabha and state legislatures. Other progressive initiatives are implemented to increase employment and efforts are made to end poverty. Additionally, in government occupations, 15% and 7.5% of the positions are designated for applicants from Scheduled Castes and Tribes. These reserved positions are relevant to every employment category in the Central and State Government services. 79 seats in the 542-seat Lok Sabha are set aside for members of the Scheduled Castes. The State Legislatures have 541 seats set aside for Scheduled Castes out of a total of 3997 seats.

The welfare programs designed for scheduled castes (SCs) have made a substantial structural impact on their

♦ Welfare scheme

education and employment prospects in both commercial and public sectors. Initiatives like the Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA), established in rural areas, provide SCs with subsidized loans to help them acquire assets. Various programs, such as NREP, MNP, Antyodaya, TRYSEM, IRDP, and The New 20-Point Programme, offer financial assistance to SC and ST families. These initiatives aim to alleviate poverty and uplift SCs by providing them with vital support and resources.

♦ Educational upliftment -SC

Other measures for Scheduled Caste school children have also been adopted by the State Governments. That are: A) supplying books; B) the provision of educational materials; C) midday meals; D) stipends; E) the provision of school uniforms, etc. Coaching and allied schemes provide training and grants to students for competitive examinations, and required texts are given to SC/ST students for preparing medical engineering courses. Additionally, 15% of the seats are set aside for Scheduled Castes. For SC/ST students applying to colleges, universities, and other educational institutions, similar provisions are also available. Then an equal number of hostel beds are set aside for them. The various state governments offer post-matric scholarships to students from certain castes and tribes. Pre- and post-matriculation scholarships help students complete their education before and after matriculation. Aside from that, the national overseas scholarship allows students to travel to other countries for postgraduate studies leading to a PhD or postdoctoral research.

♦ Constraints of upliftment

The Scheduled Castes are undertaking an inadequate but steady effort to overcome the disadvantages of untouchability and discrimination. As we've seen, the constitution of independent India has a lot of protections for them. In order to attain the objectives of social progress, social justice, and social equality, it is also necessary to positively impact the views of upper castes towards the reservation policy and other developmental measures.

4.2.2 Scheduled Tribes

A tribe is an anthropological concept. According to some authors, it is "Animistic" or "Aboriginal." A tribe is defined as a group of individuals who can be identified as a unified unit with shared characteristics. They share a common homeland, language, and ancestry. In addition, they observe kinship-based customs and have limited literacy and technological development. India's tribal populations speak

◆ Tribe

a diverse range of dialects, and their practices, traditions, and artistic expressions vary extensively. The word “Adivasi” has been used to refer to the tribe increasingly frequently in recent years. Throughout history, the isolation of tribal communities, both ecologically and socially, has been a defining feature. However, the classification of India’s tribal populations using a single set of criteria has become challenging in contemporary times. The tribes are undergoing transformation, presenting a complex scenario.

◆ Approved number of Tribal communities

Scheduled tribes are tribes or tribal communities, as well as specific parts or groups within those tribes or tribal communities, that are recognised as scheduled tribes under the Indian Constitution, as outlined in Article 342. The Scheduled Tribes Order of 1950, issued by the President of India, initially identified 312 tribal communities as scheduled tribes. Subsequently, through parliamentary acts, additional groups were included in the schedule. As part of the People of India study conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, K.S. Singh has documented 461 tribal communities in India.

◆ Colonial linkage

The Government of India Act of 1935 served as the basis for much of independent India’s Constitution, which included provisions for positive discrimination in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs & STs). These communities constituted approximately 23% of the country’s population at that time. They were entitled to various benefits, such as preferential admission to schools and colleges, reserved positions in the public sector, different financial incentives for their overall development, and parliamentary seats reserved exclusively for them. While the constitution explicitly stated that nothing in it ‘shall prevent the state from making any special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes,’ it also guaranteed the fundamental right of equality for all citizens before the law.

◆ Constitutional provisions -SC/ST

India is a welfare state dedicated to the development and welfare of its citizens in general, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged groups. The preamble, directive principles for state policy, fundamental rights, and specific articles 38, 39, and 46 in the Indian Constitution all demonstrate the state’s commitment to its people. Article 16(4-A) states that the state can provide reservations in



matters of promotions, including consequential seniority, for any class or classes of posts in services under the state to benefit the SCs and STs who are not adequately represented in such services. The 77th Amendment to the Constitution made scheduled castes and scheduled tribes eligible for reservations. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are considered part of the weaker segment of the population, as mentioned in Article 46. Additionally, the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution grants significant social, cultural, and political autonomy to tribal regions in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Article 164 establishes a Ministry of Tribal Welfare in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa. For administrative purposes, tribal regions outside the 6th Schedule are referred to as 'Scheduled Areas' in the Constitution.

◆ Tribal sub plan

The Ministry of Welfare, established on September 25, 1985, was renamed the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on May 25, 1998, to better serve the weaker and more economically and socially disadvantaged segments of society. Since its establishment on October 13, 1999, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been responsible for overseeing the development of scheduled tribes (STs). The tribal sub-plan, introduced during the Fifth Five-Year Plan, allocates 9% of State Plan funds for the development of tribal communities. Through grassroots planning facilitated by Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs), decentralization of financial powers, single-line administration, and protective and anti-exploitative measures, the socioeconomic profile of tribal people has significantly improved.

◆ Educational and vocational trainings

Vocational training centres in tribal areas help enhance the skills of tribal youth. Tribal research institutes have been established in different states to conduct research and evaluation studies on tribal communities. The Kerala Institute for Research, Training, and Development Studies (KIRTADS) is a tribal institute in Kerala. Hostels and ashram schools also provide basic education and vocational training. Post-matric scholarships, book bank coaching, and national overseas scholarships for higher studies abroad have been implemented.

◆ Income security scheme

The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), the Village Grain Bank Scheme, the National Scheduled Tribe Financial Development Corporation, and the Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran are all programs that assist in economic security and income-generating schemes for tribal communities.

Table 4.2.1 State/ UT wise overall population, ST population, Percentage of STs in India/State to total population of India/State and percentage of STs in the state to total population

S. No	India / State	Total Population	ST Population	% STs in India/State to total population of India/State	% STs in the State to total ST population in India
		(in lakh)			
	India	12108.55	1045.46	8.6	-
1	Andhra Pradesh	493.87	26.31	5.3	2.5
2	Arunachal Pradesh	13.84	9.52	68.8	0.9
3	Assam	312.06	38.84	12.4	3.7
4	Bihar	1040.99	13.37	1.3	1.3
5	Chhattisgarh	255.45	78.23	30.6	7.5
6	Goa	14.59	1.49	10.2	0.1
7	Gujarat	604.40	89.17	14.8	8.5
8	Haryana	253.51	NST	NA	NA
9	Himachal Pradesh	68.65	3.92	5.7	0.4
10	J&K	125.41	14.93	11.9	1.4
11	Jharkhand	329.88	86.45	26.2	8.3
12	Karnataka	610.95	42.49	7.0	4.1
13	Kerala	334.06	4.85	1.5	0.5
14	Madhya Pradesh	726.27	153.17	21.1	14.7
15	Maharashtra	1123.74	105.1	9.4	10.1
16	Manipur	28.56	11.67	40.9	1.1
17	Meghalaya	29.67	25.56	86.1	2.4
18	Mizoram	10.97	10.36	94.4	1.0
19	Nagaland	19.79	17.11	86.5	1.6
20	Orissa	419.74	95.91	22.8	9.2
21	Punjab	277.43	NST	NA	NA
22	Rajasthan	685.48	92.39	13.5	8.8
23	Sikkim	6.11	2.06	33.8	0.2
24	Tamil Nadu	721.47	7.95	1.1	0.8
25	Telangana	351.94	32.87	9.3	3.1
26	Tripura	36.74	11.67	31.8	1.1
27	Uttarakhand	100.86	2.92	2.9	0.3
28	Uttar Pradesh	1998.12	11.34	0.6	1.1
29	West Bengal	912.76	52.97	5.8	5.1
30	A & N Islands	3.81	0.29	7.5	0.0
31	Chandigarh	10.55	NST	NA	NA
32	D & N Haveli	3.44	1.79	52.0	0.2
33	Daman & Diu.	2.43	0.15	6.3	0.0
34	Delhi	167.88	NST	NA	NA
35	Lakshadweep	0.64	0.61	94.8	0.1
36	Puducherry	12.48	NST	NA	NA

Source: Census 2011, Office of the Registrar General, India

NST: No notified Scheduled Tribes (as in 2011), NA: Not Applicable



4.2.3 Other Backward Classes (OBC)

- ◆ Backward class identity

Only when we understand the fundamental nature of Indian society, which is composed of a number of closed status groups, can we possibly understand the backward classes in that country. Basically, “backward classes” are defined in terms of a category of people who are economically and educationally less privileged in society. The term “backward classes” refers to a wide range of social groupings with diverse socioeconomic standings and positions within the Indian social structure. They experience long-standing disadvantages and disabilities that are mostly acknowledged by the caste system. Due to their perceived status as being born into a low caste or tribe, they have inherited social difficulties such as poor status, poverty, and illiteracy. The terms “backward caste” or “backward community” are not interchangeable with “backward class.” An entire caste or community may be considered a backward class at a given moment based on social, economic, and educational standards, but it is not because they are a caste or community member; rather, it is because they are a class.

- ◆ Cultural status

Other backward classes had low social status but were not considered untouchable. Several castes in this category also had some political and economic power, and unlike the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, these castes (classes) or a subset of them were among the first to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by British rule. They made the most of the new economic opportunities. In order to gain social approval for their prosperity, they were also the ones most interested in Sanskritizing their way of life.

- ◆ Creamy layer

The term “creamy layer” in Indian politics refers to certain members of a lower socioeconomic class who have made significant advancements in their social, economic, and educational standing. They represent the progressive segment of the backward class. The family income is used to categorise and differentiate the creamy layer from the rest of the community. Only members of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) community are eligible for this categorisation. The phrase was originally used in reference to the 1992 practice of reserving jobs for specific groups in the Indra Sawhney case.

The British government’s approach to addressing poverty encompassed both political and humanitarian values. The challenges faced by the backward classes received greater attention during the British administration,

- ◆ Condition of backward class in the British period

coinciding with the strengthening of the Indian national movement. The new intelligentsia emerged from the upper castes of the backward classes and played a leadership role in the movement. However, they were not well-treated by the British administration, as their interests aligned with maintaining the division between the high and low castes. To achieve this, the lower castes were granted certain economic and political advantages, thereby widening the gap between the high and lower castes throughout British rule.

- ◆ Reflection of the terminology of Backward class in the Indian constitution.

The concept of the “backward classes” is not explicitly mentioned in the Indian Constitution. However, various articles of the Constitution address and deal with the issues of backwardness. The term “socially and educationally backward classes” is reflected in Article 15(4). Article 16(4) specifically allows for the reservation of appointments or positions in favour of any backward class group that, in the opinion of the state, is not adequately represented in its services. In this context, the term “state” refers to both the federal and state governments, as well as their agencies.

- ◆ Constitutional safeguard

Since the drafting of the Constitution, there has been a demand for similar provisions for castes other than the scheduled castes and tribes who are socially and educationally backwards. The Constitution provides specific provisions for their advancement, including legal provisions. For instance, Article 17 of the Constitution abolishes untouchability, ensuring that the scheduled castes have the same legal protections as other castes. In 1955, the Untouchability (Offences) Act was passed to further support this by establishing penalties for offences related to untouchability. Additionally, the scheduled castes now have political representation due to the expansion of the adult franchise. However, the main challenge lies in addressing social disabilities rather than just eliminating legal disabilities. Lastly, Article 340 mandates that state governments conduct investigations into the welfare of underprivileged classes.

4.2.3.1 Backward Commission: Kakka Kalekar Commission, Mandal Commission

There has been extensive discussion on the reservation policy aimed at assisting the lower classes. In 1953, Kaka Kalekar served as the Chairman of the Backward Classes Commission, which was established with the objective of determining the criteria to identify socially and educationally backward classes. The Commission observed that the



- ◆ Identified determining the status of backward class.

existing lists prepared by the central and state governments lacked clarity and contained inconsistencies. It also provided a detailed list of other backward classes. According to the Commission, a significant portion of the backward classes was characterised by illiteracy and poverty. However, the government did not implement the suggestions and recommendations put forth by the Commission with the same level of authority. Subsequently, the governments were given the discretion to establish their own criteria for creating the list of other backward classes.

- ◆ Economic status-determine factor

In subsequent years, the backward “castes” were identified through specific lists created by special commissioners appointed in each state. Movements emerged as a means of expressing the need for reservations for the lower castes, which in turn posed challenges to national integration. Additionally, since 1961, the Central Government has emphasised the use of economic criteria in recognising the Other Backward Classes. Some state administrations have raised objections to this approach. The previous classifications of the Other Backward Classes included influential castes in state politics, resulting in pressure on state governments to maintain the existing set of criteria. As the demand for reservations gained national significance, the central government established the Mandal Commission to investigate this issue.

- ◆ Mandal Commission

The Mandal Commission suggested certain criteria for the upliftment of the backward classes. These criteria are listed below:

- ◆ To establish standards for determining social and educational backwardness.
- ◆ To provide recommendations for activities aimed at advancing socially and educationally under-privileged groups of Indian citizens.
- ◆ To assess the feasibility of implementing reservation measures for the backward classes.

- ◆ Recommendations of the Mandal Commission

Under the leadership of V.P. Singh, the national government implemented one of the main recommendations of the Mandal Commission Report. This recommendation called for reserving 27% of positions in central government services and public sector organisations for members of economically and socially disadvantaged classes. Although the Mandal Commission submitted its recommendations in 1980, the Union Government did not begin to act on them until the 1990s. However, according to a study published by

the Times of India on December 26, 2015, only 12% of the workers employed by statutory organisations and ministries of the central government belong to the Other Backward Classes.

◆ Question of Equality



The question of ensuring the protection of historically oppressed and socially and economically disadvantaged people, as well as addressing the concerns of the privileged group, has been highly controversial for a long time. Regardless of family income, individuals belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are exempt from the creamy layer classification and always receive reservation benefits. This has been a longstanding point of contention. Many others, including those who do not receive such reservations, believe that even the ST-SC community should be subject to the “creamy layer” policy before obtaining further privileges such as reservations. However, this only applies to reservations for promotions, and other aspects remain unaffected. This was highlighted in the federal government’s appeal to the Supreme Court in December 2019. Understanding the diverse nature of society, different rules should be applied in different locations and situations. The principle of the right to equality may be compromised if everyone is subjected to the same laws without considering their socioeconomic status.

Summarised Overview

India has a dark history of oppression and violence due to its rigid caste system and hierarchical structure. Through various laws and provisions, the Indian Constitution aims to eliminate disparities among different sections of society and provide equality of status and opportunity to all. “Protective discrimination” is now strongly advocated in our culture as a constitutional principle for the defence and preservation of the rights of members of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, as well as other underprivileged groups. While democracy is fundamentally a social construct, it is not constrained by logic or ethics. A nation cannot progress if a significant percentage of its population is unable to take advantage of the equal opportunities guaranteed to all Indian citizens as a fundamental right.

Assignments

1. Critically examine the composition of the creamy layer and non-creamy layer categories in India?
2. Critically examine positive discrimination based on caste.
3. Describe the social structures and status of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
4. Explain the role of the Indian Constitution in uplifting SC/ST communities.
5. Describe the activities of the Commission for Other Backward Classes.
6. Explain the suggestion of the Mandal Commission report
7. Discuss the various policies and constitutional safeguards for SC, ST, and OBC categories?
8. Critically examine Reservation policies in India.
9. Describe the welfare measures of SC and ST communities.

Suggested Readings

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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Women in Indian Society

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ illustrate the changes in women's status in India
- ♦ learn about the women exploitation and gender violence in India
- ♦ examine the level of gender discrimination in the home and domestic work
- ♦ explain gender discrimination in work and public place

Background

In many parts of India, females face significant challenges in accessing education and are often subjected to discriminatory practices. For example, cultural norms and expectations that prioritise their domestic roles discourage girls from pursuing higher education. They encounter barriers such as early marriage, lack of safe transportation to schools, limited resources for education, and gender biases within the educational system itself. Also, certain fields of study, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, may have limited seats or quotas for female students. Gender discrimination is prevalent in various aspects of life, including education.

India, as a nation, is revered in a feminine form, known as Bharat Mata. Scholars from ancient India, like Patanjali and Katyayana, asserted that women received education during the early Vedic era. Women were treated equally with men in all aspects of life. Rigvedic verses imply that women had the freedom to choose their husbands and married at a mature age. Throughout the early Vedic era, women enjoyed equal rights and positions. However, after 500 BC, influences such as the Manusmriti, Islamic invasions, and later Christianisation restricted women's independence and rights, leading to the decline of women's status. Unfortunately, this trend continues today. The level and nature of women's subordination have been shaped by social and cultural contexts. Factors such as marriage laws, property rights, and religious practices have affected the status of women in Indian history. Religious traditions, with their strong influence on societal customs, have contributed to the universal subordination of women,



particularly in India. This subordination reflects an extreme expression of social stratification, wherein women and lower castes face humiliating conditions of existence. In a patriarchal society, men possess greater economic power and more access to positions of authority in the political, religious, and social spheres. On the other hand, women share characteristics with minority groups.

Keywords

Gender inequality, Sexual assaults, Domestic violence, Social evils, Dowry

Discussion

- ◆ Gender classification
- ◆ Status of women and LGBTQA+

Language, religion, caste, gender, tribe, and other factors can be used to distinguish and categorise members of a society. Previous units discussed the stratification and division of Indian society along class and caste lines. It is essential to understand gender-based classification. According to gender, people are classified as male, female, and LGBTQA+ etc. Gender often denotes how social, economic, political, and other aspects influence biological sex status in society. It means that the social, economic, and political environments in which men, women, and LGBTQA+ are situated determine their levels of social standing, economic condition, and power position. Men have more freedom in India than women or other gender groups. Their unequal social standing demonstrates their status in society. To entirely equalise men's and women's rights and opportunities, there is still a long way to go. Therefore, the various types of gender violence and inequality lead to the exploitation and discrimination of women and LGBTQA+.

- ◆ Marginalisation of LGBTQA+

For a long time, the Indian census did not acknowledge the gender variants. However, data regarding gender variant communities was gathered in the 2011 Census under the gender category "Others," along with information on their employment, level of literacy, and caste. According to the census, there are 4.88 million transgender people worldwide. Additionally, 55,000 children who were identified as transgender by their parents were counted in the 2011 census. There are many difficulties faced by



LGBTQA+ individuals in India. In addition to denying them equitable access to essential social services like work, health care, education, and housing, such bias also pushes them to marginalise themselves from society. The LGBTQA+ people are struggling to meet their specific needs. They engage in unsafe sexual behaviour and suffer from mental health issues because they lack financial assistance. Adequate measures are to be initiated to bring rehabilitation to the gender variant groups.

◆ Status of women in medieval period

A woman is subjected to various forms of exploitation in India which can be observed in our ancient Indian traditions. In India, practices such as sati, child marriage, and the prohibition on widow remarriage were deeply ingrained in the societal structure. Purdah rituals were introduced into Indian society after the Muslim invasion of the Indian subcontinent. Hindu Kshatriya rulers practised polygamy, and Rajasthani Rajputs practised Jauhar. During the Middle Ages, the status of women in India declined due to these social evils. However, despite these obstacles, some women achieved remarkable success in the fields of politics, writing, education, and religion. For instance, Razia Sultan was the only female ruler to ever govern Delhi. She defied societal norms and rose to a position of power and authority. Another notable figure in history is the female saint-poet Mirabai, who played a significant role in the Bhakti movement.

◆ Religion-determinate factor

The perplexing situation of women in India is a matter of concern. On one hand, they are worshipped as goddesses, but in almost every aspect, gods have predominance over goddesses, as depicted in Hindu religious literature like the Puranas. While a few goddesses are portrayed as strong, such as Shakti (with various forms like Durga, Kali, etc.), the prevailing societal structure reinforced male superiority. This notion of male dominance was evident in various aspects of civilisation at that time. The exploitation of women took on visible forms such as the devadasi system, widow burning, and polygamy. Religion played a significant role in influencing the position of women in Indian society. For instance, in the case of the Devadasi system, it was considered a religious practice where women married deities and lived in temples. This ritual became firmly established by the 10th century AD. However, through the system of Devadasis in temples, religion was used to exploit women, serving the needs of the temple authorities. The illegal sexual exploitation of Devadasis became prevalent, representing a clear instance of women being subjected to sexual exploitation under the

appearance of religious traditions, which denied them a dignified position in society.

- ◆ Denial of Freedom

As we saw in the case of the Devadasi system, traditional customary practices such as Sati, denied women their freedom to live. Sati was an ancient practice involving the widow being burned alive on her husband's cremation pyre. Although the widow was supposed to do it voluntarily, she was sometimes forced to perform it. Similarly, in the past, child marriages were very common in India. Young girls would live with their parents until they reached puberty. Child widows were destined for a life of extreme suffering, including shaving their heads, living alone, and being rejected by society.

- ◆ Social reform and laws

Many reformers fought for the advancement of women during the British Raj, including Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jyotirao Phule, and Pandita Ramabai. Raja Ram Mohan Roy dedicated his efforts to the eradication of societal evils such as Sati. As a result, Sati was abolished in 1829. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's efforts led to the implementation of the Widow Remarriage Act in 1856, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah's efforts resulted in the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1929, which set the minimum age of marriage for girls at fourteen.

4.3.1 Gender Exploitation

- ◆ Crimes against women

Not only in history, but also in contemporary society, gender exploitation is prevalent. Crimes against women are being reported at an alarming rate in India. Regardless of their class, caste, and educational status, women face harassment in their daily lives. Women are exploited in various ways. On one hand, it includes crimes such as prostitution and trafficking of women, adultery, kidnapping, rape, wrongful confinement, and murder. On the other hand, it encompasses crimes related to women's property, such as dishonest misappropriation, criminal breach of trust, domestic violence, dowry extortion, and insulting women's modesty.

- ◆ Physical and mental abuse

In Indian patriarchal families, men hold the position of authority within the household, while women are expected to be subservient. Cultural norms and pressures reinforce this hierarchical structure. The most prevalent form of violence against women in Indian society is spousal abuse, which is often considered a routine matter of marital discord. This not only has detrimental effects on women but also impacts the mental well-being of children.



◆ Emotional and financial abuse

Dowry refers to the gifts that the bride's family offers to the groom, his parents, and his relatives as a condition of the marriage. These gifts can include durable goods, money, and real or movable property. The dowry system often places significant financial burdens on the bride's family, resulting in severe difficulties. The practice of dowry contributes to the subjugation of women in society, despite its continued prevalence. To address this social issue, the Government of India took its first step towards outlawing dowry and controlling its practice with the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961. This act defines dowry and declares the act of giving or receiving dowry as a criminal offence.

◆ Sexual abuse

In India, rape is the crime with the fastest rate of growth compared to murder, robbery, and kidnapping. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), two women are raped in the country every 60 minutes. Additionally, there are numerous incidents of eve teasing, which include sexual glances, inappropriate touching, brushing, and remarks that violate women's rights. These acts often occur in crowded places, buses, and trains used for public transportation. These statistics likely underestimate the true prevalence of such incidents since many go unreported due to fear of stigma and lack of awareness about rights.

◆ Violation of human rights

In 1956, the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act was enacted. However, there continue to be numerous reports of young girls and women being trafficked. One of the most grievous problems in our society is the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. There is a significant issue of internal trafficking of women and children throughout the nation, involving sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, bonded labour, and indentured servitude. Trafficking is a global and complex problem, encompassing criminal organisations, severe human rights violations, economic exploitation, and social injustice. Both sex trafficking and non-sex-based exploitation are prevalent. The trafficking of women and children results in the violation of their rights and dignity in numerous ways, leading to immense suffering. It affects their rights to life, dignity, security, privacy, health, education, and access to effective remedies for grievances.

Women are subjected to abuse not only in the physical world but also in the virtual world. On social media, women are watched and stalked, and unfair advantage is taken of them. Indecent content is published using their names,

- ◆ Cyber exploitation, Indecent representation of women

and their photographs are used in pornography after their accounts have been hacked. Women also face significant mental harassment through blackmail and harassment. The representation of women in any form of advertising or public communication that is indecent is prohibited. This includes representations in words, print, graphics, or any other medium. With the advancement of electronic media and widespread access to the Internet, technology continues to evolve rapidly. It serves as a clear example of the exploitation and objectification of women.

4.3.2 Gender Discrimination- Public and Home

- ◆ Forms of gender inequality

India is rapidly emerging as a global power in various domains. However, for the majority of its citizens, specifically women, the pursuit of a dignified existence is still ongoing. Women face challenges in every aspect of life, including employment, malnutrition among girls, unequal healthcare, limited access to resources, denial of property rights, and other explicit forms of gender discrimination. India's cultural and religious framework significantly influences gender inequality. Two issues closely associated with gender inequality are the transfer of surnames and lineage, as well as social security.

- ◆ Health Gender discrimination

India has an exceptionally high rate of child malnutrition because the tradition in India requires that women eat last and consume the least throughout their lives, even when pregnant and lactating. As a result, malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle. The average female life expectancy in India is low compared to many countries, but it has shown gradual improvement over the years. In many families, especially in rural areas, girls and women face nutritional discrimination within the family, leading to anemia and malnourishment.

- ◆ Prenatal discrimination, Discrimination in nutritional access

Another unfortunate fact is that a new born girl is still considered "a burden in many cases" and is therefore subjected to neglect from childhood. Pre-birth sex-selective abortion continues to occur, despite being illegal, because in many developing nations like India, there is still a prevailing belief that a baby girl would be a burden to a family in the future. In rural areas, this belief is further supported by the notion that women, being perceived as less physically strong than men, would not be as economically and socially productive. India's female life expectancy, while previously



low compared to other nations, has gradually increased over time. Girls and women often face nutritional discrimination within their families, resulting in undernourishment and anemia, particularly in rural households. And this perpetuates a cycle where malnourished mothers give birth to malnourished children.

◆ Denial of inheriting property right

Another forms of discrimination against women is based on property rights. In the majority of Indian families, women do not receive a share of parental property and lack ownership of property in their own names. Limited access to land and property persists due to weak enforcement of protective laws. In fact, some laws discriminate against women in terms of land and property rights. In 1956, inheritance rights were granted to women under Hindu personal laws. However, daughters' shares in family property were contingent on their father's share, while sons had a separate share. Consequently, a father could disinherit a daughter by relinquishing his share, while the son would still be entitled to a share. Additionally, married daughters had no right to reside in the family home, even if facing harassment in their marriage. Inheritance rights for women are restricted and frequently violated. Despite numerous laws safeguarding women's rights, traditional patriarchal views persist and are reinforced within households. Even basic laws protecting women have not been effectively enforced, resulting in limited access to land and property for women in practice. Several states, under the pretext of preventing fragmentation of agricultural holdings, have excluded widows and daughters from inheriting agricultural land, based on the belief that women have minimal stake in agriculture.

◆ Educational barrier

Sons are typically given greater educational opportunities compared to daughters. Boys are generally enrolled in private or better-quality schools, while girls are more commonly sent to public schools. Furthermore, the legal age of marriage, set at 18, acts as a barrier to women's career advancement. However, this trend has started to change, with both boys and girls now attending suitable educational institutions, fostering economic growth and prospects without gender disparities.

◆ Equalising household work

Women put in more rigorous and longer workdays than men, but their efforts often go unappreciated. Traditional gender norms are still heavily influenced by culture. Many women prioritise raising a family, regardless of their educational and professional goals, and choose to engage in household work to fulfill preconceived gender roles that

include housework and child care. Despite having full-time employment outside the home, women often end up being the primary care givers in families, although in some households the workload may be distributed more equitably.

◆ Glass ceiling

Males and females in India are entitled to equal rights; however, there exist unspoken constraints that act as obstacles for women in middle and higher management positions. While there may be rare instances where women perform less well than men, more commonly, intangible barriers prevent women from reaching the highest levels of success, particularly among those who are focused on their careers. These barriers highlight the tension that women experience between their family obligations and their professional aspirations. During promotion and appraisal processes, senior management often places excessive emphasis on personal and irrelevant factors.

4.3.3 Social Justice and Women Protection Law

◆ Legal protection

In India, everyone has the right to protection from all forms of atrocities. The law of the land provides equal protection and safeguards for women and all individuals. There are established rights to protect women as employees, parents, wives, daughters, and, most importantly, as individuals. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006, the Special Marriage Act of 1954, the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, the Indian Divorce Act of 1969, the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1971, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013, the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, and the Protection under the I.T. Act, 2000, among others, are just a few of the laws that protect women in India.

◆ National Commission for Women

A regulatory body of the Indian government is known as the National Commission for Women (NCW). It was established in January 1992 with the objective of safeguarding and promoting women's rights in India. The NCW provides a platform for women to voice their concerns and advocate for their empowerment. Alongside the NCW, several organisations work towards the promotion and protection of women's rights, including One Stop Crisis Centers (also known as Nirbhaya Centers), Pink Police, and the National Association of Rural Women of India. These initiatives aim to address various issues faced by women and ensure their well-being.



Summarised Overview

Indians have a rich history of preserving their culture, which has traditionally emphasised patriarchal dominance, undervalued the role of women, and excluded them from positions of authority. Women have been assigned the responsibility of upholding the honour and dignity of their families and were expected to remain silent and refrain from speaking up about any negative experiences they faced. Publicly addressing their suffering was considered shameful and dishonourable for the family. Unfortunately, there have been instances where women who dared to speak out faced intimidation and attempted assault from the accused. These women also endured mistreatment at work and were even denied employment opportunities. They faced unfair treatment and were often marginalised by society. While there have been significant changes to the position of women in India over the past few millennia, the exploitation of women still persists, despite the enactment of numerous laws. The conditions are not dissimilar in the LGBTQA+ groups and other communities. The discussions on them occupy another spectrum of analysis.

Assignments

1. Write a short note on historical practises of gender discrimination.
2. How do you explain gender inequality?
3. Critically examine the statement “A woman is subjected to various forms of exploitation from birth to death.”
4. List the ways in which women are exploited in today’s world.
5. Explain the various efforts to minimise gender inequality in India.
6. Critically evaluate the statement women are considered “second sex.”
7. Describe gender discrimination in households sphere.
8. How do you illustrate gender discrimination at the workplace. Elaborate with the point of work-life balance and the glass ceiling?
9. Critically examine the statement, “Dowry refers to the gifts that the bride’s family offers to the groom.”
10. Explain crime against women on virtual world.

Suggested Readings

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4. Renzetti C.M. & Bergen R.K eds. (2005) *Violence Against Women*. UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher.

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സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കുരിട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

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