

SOCIETY IN INDIA

COURSE CODE: B21SO04DC

Undergraduate Programme in Sociology

Discipline Core Course

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Society in India

Course Code: B21SO04DC

Semester - IV

Discipline Core Course
Undergraduate Programme in Sociology
Self Learning Material
(With Model Question Paper Sets)



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



SOCIETY IN INDIA

Course Code: B21SO04DC

Semester- IV

Discipline Core Course

Undergraduate Programme in Sociology

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Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The UG programme in Sociology is designed as a coherent set of academic learning modules that generate interest in dissecting the social engineering process. Both theory and practice are covered using the most advanced tools in sociological analysis. Care has been taken to ensure a chronological progression in understanding the discipline. The curriculum provides adequate space for a linear journey through the historical concepts in sociology, catering to the needs of aspirants for the competitive examination as well. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-01-2025

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BLOCK

The Idea of India



UNIT

Colonial Image, Indian Nationalism

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the colonial image of India and idea of nationalism
- ◆ analyse the approaches of different social leaders; Mahatma Gandhi and Bhim Rao Ambedkar on Indian nationalism
- ◆ familiarize themselves with the issues and challenges of the 'Idea of India' before and after independence
- ◆ develop a sociological perspective for understanding the dynamics of Indian Society

Prerequisites

Have you visited India Gate in Delhi? Do you know who built it and for what purpose? India Gate was built by the British administration in India as a war memorial to honor the soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War. Now, look at the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial in Amritsar. What does it convey to you? It undoubtedly reminds the onlookers about of the tragic incident of 1919, when British forces brutally massacred hundreds of innocent people. While India Gate represents British colonial rule and its authority, the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial symbolises the Indian national movement and its resistance against British colonialism.

In this unit, we will discuss the colonial imagery and debates on Indian nationalism, with special emphasis on the thoughts and ideas of Gandhi and W regarding the concept of India. We will familiarise you with the political characteristics of

this era, particularly the rise of Indian nationalism. Additionally, you will explore the formation of various provincial associations and the British administrative measures that contributed to the growth of anti-British sentiment and Indian nationalism.

Keywords

Colonialism, Resocialisation, Nationalist movement, Swaraj, Social unity, Ideal society, Preamble

Discussion

The Great Revolt of 1857 is considered the culmination of widespread discontent against British rule and also marked the beginning of a long struggle against British imperialism. In the Presidencies of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras—where the British first established their control—the emerging intelligentsia, benefiting from Western education, became increasingly critical of the exploitative nature of colonial rule. The process of political mobilisation gained momentum in the second half of the 19th century. Various Indian political and social leaders spearheaded anti-colonial movements and political activism. However, despite numerous tribal and peasant uprisings against imperialism in different regions of India, there was no unified national movement at that time.

India is a vast country with diverse ideas, ideologies, cultures, and practices. It has undergone different phases of governance, including monarchy, colonial rule, and its transition into a democratic republic. India gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947 and became a democratic nation. Various ideas and ideologies have influenced and shaped Indian society in multiple ways. Colonial rule, despite its exploitative nature,

played a role in unifying India's diverse cultural and social fabric under a broader national identity. The interpretations and approaches to Indian nationalism varied among different leaders, thinkers, and activists.

Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar were two eminent leaders who had distinct ideologies and approaches, both of which profoundly influenced and shaped modern India.

1.1.1 Colonialism: Process and Methods

Colonialism refers to the establishment, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a process in which the metropole, or parent state, asserts sovereignty over the colony, and colonists from the metropole reshape the colony's social structure, government, and economy. Colonialism highlights the unequal relationships between the metropole and the colony, as well as between colonists and the indigenous or native population. The French colonial empire, the Dutch Empire, and the English colonial empire (which later



control over India.

1.1.1.1 Impact of Colonialism

Now, let us examine the impact of colonisation, which can be viewed from different perspectives. Here, we will focus on two major aspects: social and economic, which are significant and will be discussed in detail.

Economically, the Industrial Revolution helped English merchants amass substantial wealth from Asia, Africa, and the Americas. They sought to use this newfound wealth to establish industries and expand trade with India. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, led to mass production through mechanisation. This resulted in a significant increase in the output of finished products. The East India Company played a crucial role in financing and expanding British manufacturing. During this time, there was a class of manufacturers in England who benefitted more from production than from trade. They sought more raw materials from India and the ability to export finished goods back to India. These British manufacturers waged a campaign against the East India Company, its trade monopoly, and its privileges between 1793 and 1813. They succeeded in ending the East India Company's monopoly on trade with India. As a result, India became an economic colony of Industrial England.

The impact of colonialism was also felt in various sectors such as the textile industry and trade, land revenue policies and settlements, commercialisation of agriculture, and the rise of a new money-lending community, which contributed to the formation of a middle class. Additionally, there were developments in transportation and communication systems that benefited British interests but also had lasting effects on India.



Socially and culturally, after the British arrived in India, Indian society underwent numerous changes. Many social practices, such as female infanticide, child marriage, Sati (widow burning), polygamy, and the rigidity of the caste system, were exposed and challenged in the 19th century. These practices violated human dignity and values, particularly affecting women, who faced discrimination at all stages of life and were the most vulnerable members of society. At the time, only a small number of upper-caste men had access to education. The Vedas, written in Sanskrit, were accessible only to Brahmins, while the priestly class maintained costly rituals, sacrifices, and practices surrounding birth and death.

When the British arrived, they brought with them ideas from the Renaissance, the Reformation, and evolving European concepts such as liberty, equality, freedom, and human rights. These ideas resonated with some segments of Indian society, leading to numerous reform movements. Visionary reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Aruna Asaf Ali, and Pandita Ramabai were at the forefront of these movements. Their aim was to unite people and promote the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Several legal measures were enacted to improve the status of women, such as the outlawing of Sati in 1829 by Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General at the time, and the passing of a law in 1856 that allowed widows to remarry. In 1872, inter-caste and inter-communal marriages were legalised, and the Sharda Act of 1929 prohibited child marriage by making it illegal to marry a girl under the age of 14 and a boy under the age of 18. These movements were also highly critical of the caste system, particularly the practice of untouchability. The influence of reformers, reform societies, and religious organisations was felt across the country, and their impact was especially visible during the national movement. Women began to gain

better educational opportunities and started working in professions and government jobs outside the home.

On the legal and judicial front, Indians struggled to adapt to the British-imposed administrative system. British officials often treated Indians with contempt and denied them political rights. Indians were excluded from higher-ranking positions in both civil and military administrations. The British also introduced a new legal system, establishing a hierarchy of civil and criminal courts. The laws were codified, and efforts were made to separate the executive from the judiciary. While the British aimed to establish the 'Rule of Law' in India, this system largely served British interests, allowing them to exercise arbitrary power and interfere with the rights and liberties of Indians. The courts were largely inaccessible to the general public, and justice became an expensive endeavor. Furthermore, the judicial system created distinctions between Europeans and Indians, further reinforcing colonial inequalities.

1.1.2 Nationalism in India

Nationalism has been defined in various ways, but all definitions begin with the concept of the nation, which most scholars agree emerged during the transition to the modern industrial age. This transition led to the decline of monarchies and other kinship- or tribe-based communities and groups. Early scholars viewed nations as being based on primal attachments that were "given" to individuals upon birth into a specific geographic community or ethnic group. However, this understanding has evolved into the concept of "imagined communities," where nations are defined by a sense of attachment among individuals who, despite being dispersed across space and time and unlikely to meet, share customs, language, traditions, culture, or residence within defined borders.



The development of Indian nationalism has been a complex and multifaceted process, influenced by various factors. The social structure of pre-British Indian society was unique, perhaps without precedent in history. Hinduism was not a single, unified religion but rather a collection of diverse religious cults that divided the community into various sects and castes. The significant social and religious divisions among Hindus, and more broadly among Indians, provided a complex backdrop for India's rise to nationalism.

Another striking feature of Indian nationalism is that it arose in the context of India's political subjugation by the British. The advanced British nation radically altered the economic structure of Indian society to serve its own interests. They established a centralised government and introduced modern education, communication technologies, and other institutions. This led to the creation of new social classes and the emergence of novel social forces. These social forces, by their very nature, clashed with British imperialism, becoming the foundation and driving force behind the rise and development of Indian nationalism.

1.1.2.1 Colonial Perspective of Indian Nationalism

During the nineteenth century, the colonialist paradigm of Indian history reached its peak. This viewpoint was evident in the works of many English historians, beginning with James Mill's *The History of British India*. Some notable historians who provided overarching interpretations of Indian history include Mountstuart Elphinstone, Henry Elliot and John Dowson, W.W. Hunter, and Vincent Smith.

Colonialists dismissed the idea of India as a nation. Colonial thinkers often emphasized India's diversity and disunity as justification for British colonial rule, which they argued had united the country. From the early days

of colonial rule, India was portrayed as a land of hostile and warring units. Many colonial figures, including W.W. Hunter, Herbert Risley, and others, attempted to prove this by segregating and classifying the country into countless tribes and castes. Prominent British historians such as John Strachey and John Seeley asserted that it was impossible to forge a nation in India because it had never possessed the characteristics of a nation and could never develop them. They argued that India was a jumble of disparate religious, ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups that could never be united into a single nation.

With the rise of the nationalist movement, which began in the late nineteenth century and matured in the twentieth century, colonialist ideologues and historians were forced to respond more forcefully. They dismissed the nationalist movement as a trivial agitation led by Bengali Babus or members of the middle class.

Valentine Chirol, in his book *Indian Unrest*, made one of the most forceful arguments in this regard, claiming that India was a "mere geographical expression," and that even this geography had been created by the British. He argued that India was a "mixed bag of races, people, castes, and creeds" that could never become a unified nation and was, in fact, "the polar opposite of everything that the word 'national' implies." In his view, India was "inhabited by a great variety of nations," with far more distinct languages spoken in India than in Europe, and with racial differences between groups like the Maharattas and Bengalis being more profound than those between Germans and Portuguese. According to Chirol, British rule alone "prevents these ancient divisions from erupting into open and sanguinary strife once more." Thus, for him, the term "India" was merely a British-created geographical label for administrative purposes.

Similarly, Vincent Smith argued that

Indians lacked fundamental unity. He claimed that, except for brief periods of imperial rule, India's political system was always composed of "mutually repellent molecules." The lack of cohesion among Hindu states made them "easy prey" for "ferocious hordes of Arabs, Turks, and Afghans, bound together by stern fanaticism." This disunity could only be resolved by imposing a central authority from the outside, as the British had done. Smith suggested that "if the hand of the benevolent despotism that now holds her in its iron grasp is withdrawn, India will be fragmented once more."

According to these viewpoints, there was no possibility for a national movement to emerge. Even after the First World War, when the national movement became a pan-Indian mass movement, colonial historians questioned its effectiveness and attempted to highlight religious, caste, and linguistic divisions in order to deny it a national character.

1.1.2.2 Nationalism: Indian Perspectives

In response to the colonialist viewpoint, nationalist perspectives on Indian nationalism and the national movement emerged. While some ideas from colonial historiography were accepted by nationalist writers, they strongly opposed the colonial denigration of India and its people. In contrast to the instrumentalist approach of many colonial historians, nationalist historians took an idea-centric approach. There are primarily two viewpoints among them: some argue that nationalist ideas were adopted due to Western influence, while others believe these ideas have existed since ancient times.

Moderate nationalists believed that the spirit of freedom arose primarily as a result of Western influences in the early stages of the national movement. According to these historians, Western education and

ideas of liberty were mainly responsible for the formation of national consciousness. The spread of Western ideas created a fervor in India that prepared the English-educated middle classes to develop a sense of nationalism. Their feelings of patriotism were fueled by their desire for liberty and freedom. The search for self-expression and self-assertion led to the formation of the Indian National Congress.

At present, many Indian nationalists and historians do not view India as a fully formed nation. They saw India as a "nation-in-the-making," as Surendranath Banerjea put it. According to them, the national movement's goal was to unite Indians from various regions and walks of life to form a single nation based on their shared grievances. R.C. Majumdar argued, "The conception of India as a common motherland was still in the realm of fancy." He suggested that there was no concept of India as we know it today. At the turn of the nineteenth century, there were Bengalis, Hindustanis, Marathas, Sikhs, and others, but no "Indians." He believed that it was the Congress's movements that "gave reality to the ideal of Indian unity." Tara Chand also argued that the formation of an Indian nation was a recent phenomenon resulting from "a combination of economic and political change."

However, there was another strong view that claimed India had been a nation since ancient times. Radha Kumud Mookerji popularized the idea that India had been great and unified since antiquity in his book *Fundamental Unity of India* and other works. He argued that India had a sense of geographical unity since ancient times, and even the concept of nationalism was present in ancient India. In his book *Young India*, Lala Lajpat Rai claimed, "India has been a nation for the last 2,000 years." In *Hindu Polity*, K.P. Jayaswal asserted that India had everything that modern Britain had: large empires, long-lasting and successful



republics, representative elective institutions, strong parliaments, a constitutional monarchy, and the supremacy of law over executive authority.

Rabindranath Tagore, on the other hand, depicted India as a civilization where various invaders, such as the Greeks, Shakas, Huns, Turks, Persians, Afghans, and others, assimilated into its ethos, enriching its culture. Thus, India was more than just a territorial unit; it also possessed a broader civilisational and cultural unity. Tagore located India's national identity in this inclusive and assimilative spirit, distinguishing it from European nationalism, which he saw as focused on disruptive political strife. Mahatma Gandhi shared a similar vision, visualizing both India's past and its future. In his book *Indian Struggle*, Subhas Chandra Bose argued that despite India's vast diversity, the country possessed "a fundamental unity." Jawaharlal Nehru famously described India as "unity in diversity," a "cultural unity amidst diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads."

Apart from the spirit of liberty, nationalist historians emphasised a number of factors that contributed to the rise of the national movement, including the colonial rulers' generally hostile attitude, Viceroy Lytton's reactionary policies, the Ilbert Bill controversy, modern education, the printing press, modern literature, and, most importantly, the partition of Bengal. The racial superiority displayed by the British in India, along with the official policy of racial discrimination in certain areas, humiliated Indians and fueled their resentment.

Nationalist historians also highlighted the economic factors contributing to widespread dissatisfaction among Indians. These included peasant exploitation, high land revenue, forced cultivation of indigo and other cash crops, the drain of wealth from India, and the wasteful expenditure of Indian revenue

on maintaining a large military force used against Indians or to fight wars that did not concern India. Nationalist historians believed that the country's leaders were dedicated idealists motivated by patriotism and concern for the country's welfare. Even though many of them were from the middle classes, these leaders had no personal, group, or class interests, according to this view. They were selfless spokespeople for the silent majority, who were unable to voice their concerns. They advocated for national, secular, and progressive politics while representing all classes, communities, and groups.

1.1.2.3 Debate on Nationalism: Gandhi and Ambedkar

The philosophy of early Indian nationalism focused more on social issues rather than political ones due to the deep social cleavages and the uneven development that made the modern notion of a nation seem far-fetched. In this context, the discussion of Indianness largely centered on forms of adaptation to Western ideas or the products of colonialism.

By the time Gandhi entered the political arena in India, following his long and transformative experiments with truth in South Africa, the debate between the Moderates and the Extremists had largely subsided, and the debate over the primacy of the social or the political had been resolved. Many European ideas and concepts had become an integral part of the nationalist discourse, largely due to the widespread influence of reform movements and the nationalist struggle on the Indian consciousness. Gandhi emerged as the representative and unifying figure of the Indian nationalist movement.

He rejected the notion that India's national identity was a recent creation, particularly in light of the impact of British colonialism. Instead, he traced the idea of the Indian nation back to ancient Indian heritage, aligning with

earlier cultural nationalism. Gandhi argued that the concept of India as a nation existed long before the Western idea of nationalism or the nation-state came into being, not only in its rudimentary form but also in the context of its fulfillment.

1.1.2.4 Gandhi and Indian Nationalism

Gandhi refutes the popular belief that “India became a nation under British rule” and rejects the idea that India became a nation only after the British introduced Western ideas and modern means of communication such as railways and telegraphs. He dismisses this viewpoint as a British interpretation of Indian history, stating in *Hind Swaraj*, “I hold this to be a mistake. The English have taught us that we were not always one nation, and that it will take centuries for us to unite. There are no foundations for this. Before they came to India, we were one nation. We were inspired by a single thought. Our way of life was similar. It was because we were one nation that we were able to establish one kingdom. Subsequently, they divided us.”

Gandhi’s claim that India is a nation is based on two main assumptions: the first is that ancient Indian civilisation had the capacity to accommodate diversity and plurality, and the second is that in ancient India, the acharyas (spiritual leaders) laid the foundation for the evolution of an all-India consciousness by establishing places of pilgrimage. Although India’s ancient civilization was predominantly Hindu, it was open to non-Hindu values and ideas. Gandhi exemplifies India’s adaptability in integrating new ideas and values into its ancient civilisation over many centuries.

In support of the second claim, Gandhi notes that pilgrimage centers such as Haridwar in the north, Rameshwaram in the south, and Jagannath in the east were

established “to create and sustain a sense of common identity among Indians scattered across an enormous territory... they saw that India was one undivided land, so made by nature.” As a result, they argued that India must be a single nation, which led to the establishment of holy places throughout India that instilled in the people a sense of nationality not found in other parts of the world.

India’s strength, according to Gandhi, lies in its unity amidst its diversity. He acknowledges the existence of many languages and dialects but insists that Devanagari should replace all provincial Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. Until a single script is established, Hindustani could be used as a lingua franca, with the option of writing it in either Persian or Nagari characters. Gandhi asserts, “When the hearts of two meet, the two forms of the same language will be fused together, and we shall have a resultant of the two, containing as many Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, or other words as may be necessary for its full growth and full expression.”

“India cannot cease to be one nation because people of different religions live in it,” Gandhi writes, referring to India as the home of many religions. The introduction of foreigners does not necessarily destroy a nation; they merge into it. Only when such a condition exists in a country does it become a nation. The country must have an assimilation faculty. India has always been a country like this. In reality, there are as many religions as there are people; however, those who are aware of their national identity do not interfere with one another’s religion. If they do, they are unfit to be called a country. Hindus who believe that India should only be populated by Hindus are living in a fantasy world. The Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, and Christians who have made India their country are fellow countrymen, and they will have



to live in unity, if only for their own interest. “In no part of the world are one nationality and one religion synonymous, nor has it ever been so in India.”

In response to a reader’s question in *Hind Swaraj*, “Did the introduction of Mohammedanism not unmake the nation?” Gandhi acknowledges the factual differences between Hindus and Muslims but does not regard these differences as serious enough to prevent composite nationalism from emerging. He does not see Muslims, Parsis, Sikhs, and Christians as a threat to Indian civilization but rather as an opportunity to accommodate them. He also emphasises that religion, as a sect, should not be used to determine nationality: India cannot cease to be one nation because people of various religions live there. The introduction of foreigners does not always result in the destruction of a nation.

Regarding language, Gandhi rejects Macaulay’s idea that English should play a central role in India and advocates for the primacy of the mother tongue, or provincial languages. He emphasises the necessity of using Hindustani as India’s lingua franca, writing, “I no longer believe as I used to in Lord Macaulay as a benefactor through his Minute on education.” Gandhi criticises Macaulay’s educational policy, arguing, “The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us.” He claims that English-speaking Indians have further enslaved the nation, adding, “The curse of the nation will rest not on the English, but on us.” Gandhi rejects Macaulay’s assertion that Sanskrit and Persian would lose their foundational value in Indian civilisation, warning that if English is given a cultural role, it would amount to national suicide.

While Gandhi disagrees with Macaulay’s view of English as the foundation of Indian civilisation, he acknowledges English’s practical role in facilitating

scientific education and inter-provincial communication. Gandhi insists that each province’s mother tongue should serve as the primary basis for its cultural life, while also recognizing that English should be used to help develop the mother tongue. “We have to improve all our languages,” Gandhi says in *Hind Swaraj*. He advocates for translating valuable English books into various Indian languages and suggests that English should be the language of scientific education, while the mother tongue should be used for ethical education. Gandhi proposes Hindi as India’s lingua franca, written in either Devanagari or Persian script, emphasising that “every cultured Indian will know, in addition to his own provincial language, Sanskrit if a Hindu; Arabic if a Muslim; Persian if a Parsi; and all will know Hindi. Some Hindus should know Arabic and Persian; some Muslims and Parsees should know Sanskrit. Several Northerners and Westerners should learn Tamil.”

Gandhi was a firm advocate of language-based states. When a proposal for India’s linguistic reorganisation was defeated in the Imperial Legislature in 1918, Gandhi expressed support for it in a letter, stating, “Your idea is excellent, but there is no possibility of carrying it out in the present atmosphere.” Three years later, he told the Home Rule League that they should “strive to bring about a linguistic division of India” to “ensure prompt attention to people’s needs and the development of every component part of the nation.”

Gandhi emphasised religious pluralism and the fundamental truth in all major world religions. He earnestly urged his followers to “remember that their own religion is the truest for each man, even if it ranks low on the philosophical scales.” His encounter with missionaries in South Africa played a crucial role in shaping his ideas about religion. Through their discussions, he realised the

importance of religion and the positive and negative aspects of their teachings.

1.1.2.5 Gandhi and Swaraj

Gandhi defined nationalism as self-rule, in which the entire community, not just the elite, is free and active; in which public order is based on soul force rather than brute force; and in which national interest is the highest ethical criterion for state action. As evidenced by his vehement criticism of the Indian princes, whose tyranny he argued was worse than that of the British, he rejects the idea that a government of national elites is beneficial simply because it is made up of national elites. “You will admit that the people under several Indian princes are being ground down,” he reminds the reader in *Hind Swaraj*. “They are mercilessly crushed by the latter. Their tyranny exceeds that of the English.” Similarly, by criticising Madan Lal Dhingra, he rejects the violent methods of Revolutionary nationalists, claiming, “Those who will rise to power by murder will certainly not make the nation happy.” He believes that soul force is more powerful than brute force, citing Tulsidas’ message of *daya* (compassion) as the true foundation of *dharma*. He is pragmatic enough to recognise that state violence cannot be completely eliminated, but he suggests that any violence the state must use should be in the interest of the people as a whole, not just the national elite, and must be strictly in line with the principles of *daya*. He emphasises the importance of striking the right balance between *daya* and national interest. The flaw of modern nationalism is its separation, which leads to the elite acting in ways that harm the masses.

In defining a nation, Gandhi emphasises the true meaning of *swaraj* as both a mental and physical state. As a mental state, it entails: (1) inner freedom from the temptations of modern civilisation, such as greed and

power; (2) freedom from hatred of the nation’s “enemy,” the British; and (3) active love for the Indian masses. *Swaraj*, as an external condition, involves: (1) political independence from foreign dominance and (2) a lifelong commitment to improving the material conditions of the Indian people, addressing poverty and caste oppression. *Swaraj* is not about replacing English *sahibs* with Indian “brown” *sahibs*, because doing so would be akin to “English rule without the Englishman; of wanting the tiger’s nature but not the tiger; of making India English and calling it Englishstan instead of Hindustan.” He recalls Mazzini’s vision of freedom, which includes the entire Italian people, in contrast to Garibaldi and his associates’ vision of simply driving the Austrians out by force of arms. “I am certain you do not wish to reproduce such a condition (as that of modern Italy) in India. I believe you want the millions of Indians to be happy, not the reins of government in your hands,” Gandhi says.

Swaraj is about more than just getting rid of the British; it’s also about overcoming the Indian elite’s fascination with modern civilization, which teaches them to oppress the Indian people. In the last chapter of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi proposes nineteen points for the moral transformation of the Indian elite, addressing it to the professional classes—doctors, lawyers, scientists, administrators, politicians, and business executives—to become instruments of service to the nation first, with money or status as a secondary goal. The pursuit of *artha* (money) must be done in the context of *dharma*, which means establishing mechanisms for national development that benefit the health of both the body and the soul, as well as the well-being of the weak and poor, not just the wealthy and powerful. This ideal is symbolised by Gandhi’s emphasis on *Khadi*. Self-reform, constitutional reforms, and economic reforms are all parts of *Swaraj*.



1.1.2.6 Ambedkar and Nationalism

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956), the principal architect of the Indian Constitution and “a symbol of revolt” (as described by Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister), was one of the country’s most important nation-builders. The reactions of Dalits (formerly known as untouchables) to criticism of Ambedkar’s role in India’s freedom struggle and the construction of the national movement have led him to reconsider his nationalist ideas. Ambedkar’s ideas, particularly his thoughts on nationalism, are more than just those of a great thinker. They are elements of a collective ideology that act as a driving force in a fast-changing society, competing with other ideologies. Ambedkar is the only modern Indian ideologue who attempted to develop a comprehensive theory of nationalism and apply it critically to the Indian context. Unfortunately, theoretical reflections and justifications were almost nonexistent within India’s nationalist movement.

Nationalism is an ideology based on devotion to one’s country, whether by birth or choice. It focuses on the attitude members of a nation adopt regarding their national identity and the actions they take when seeking political sovereignty. In a broader sense, nationalism includes attitudes, claims, and directives for action that assign a fundamental political, moral, or cultural value to nations and nationality, granting special obligations and permissions to these entities. Ambedkar’s nationalism began as a response to both internal oppression and external dominance. He fought for equality and civil rights for those who had been denied them for centuries. According to Ambedkar, Indian society was a system that did not allow for the development of sentiments of equality and fraternity, which are necessary for a democratic form of government. Many people were denied their fundamental human rights, and Ambedkar sought constitutional

protections for the oppressed. He believed Indian society was fundamentally a caste system, comprising an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt. Regarding foreign dominance, Ambedkar’s viewpoint was clear.

Although Ambedkar recognised the importance of eradicating social evils that plagued the lives of downtrodden people, he believed the British were indifferent to addressing these issues, as their intervention in the existing social and economic system would lead to resistance. While foreign rule had been a significant force in India, Ambedkar’s nationalism took shape primarily through the struggle against British rule.

a.Nationalism and Social Unity

Ambedkar’s nationalism was rooted in his sense of dignity for both the people and the country. He had deep compassion for the poor and untouchables, which drove him to fight for the protection of basic human rights. Some Congress leaders branded Ambedkar’s views as anti-national, but in reality, they were expressions of the humanism and nationalism to which he devoted himself. Those who blamed Ambedkar for opposing the Congress-led freedom struggle failed to realize that freedom from foreign rule was no more important than freedom from domestic slavery and exploitation. According to Ambedkar, true freedom is a misleading concept if a nation’s freedom does not also represent the freedom of its people. “A nation may be considered a unit philosophically, but sociologically, it cannot be regarded as consisting of many classes. The freedom of the nation, if it is to be a reality, must guarantee the freedom of the various classes, particularly those who are treated as servile classes,” he writes. In this sense, Ambedkar placed a high value on the emancipation of oppressed people who had been enslaved by the Varna system for centuries. A nation must be truly representative of all people if it is to be considered coextensive with the ruling

class. This can only happen when people are free of fear, oppression, and exploitation, resulting in true liberty for the masses.

According to Ambedkar, a nation consists not only of the society—comprising various groups and classes—but also of the physical land these groups occupy. He emphasized individual liberty, though this did not reflect any negative feelings toward India's physical liberty. This distinction often led to misunderstandings among those who couldn't differentiate between political freedom and social freedom. Nationalist leaders, particularly Hindu nationalists, typically placed a high value on political freedom but ignored the social dimensions of nationalism. Ambedkar argued that, without true social freedom, nationalism becomes a conduit for internal slavery and structured tyranny for the poor and marginalised.

Ambedkar saw nationalism as a process of social assimilation that reflects the inner unity of a people. When social brotherhood prevails, nationalism achieves perfect harmony, transcending caste, color, and creed. He viewed nationalism as the negation of the caste system, which he saw as a form of deep-seated communalism. He emphasised the need to combat casteism, linguistic division, communalism, and separatism, believing these social ills divided people into small groups, contrary to the spirit of nationalism. For Ambedkar, communalism and groupism threatened national integration and obstructed the path to equality and fraternity.

Ambedkar's view of nationalism and patriotism fostered a strong sense of social brotherhood. While patriotism is the feeling of attachment to the soil of one's birthplace, nationalism is the feeling of attachment to the national society. According to Ambedkar, both patriotism and nationalism are essential for democracy and equality. He argued that patriotism requires action in the right direction and a reaction against wrongdoing.

A nationalist leader must have deep faith in himself to eradicate imperialism, social tyranny, casteism, communalism, and forced labor, among other societal ills. Ambedkar criticized the idea of “the divine right of the majority to rule the minorities according to the majority's wishes,” calling it irrational and anti-national. Such monopolisation of power by any majority group—whether religious or political—was incompatible with true nationalism.

b. Ambedkar, Nationality, and Nationalism

Ambedkar believed that different religions in Indian society should act as unifying forces behind the creation of a national spirit, rather than symbols of inhumane treatment. Using religion to perpetuate injustice would hinder the development of a strong national unity. Similarly, although Ambedkar recognised the challenges posed by India's linguistic diversity, he argued that language should not obstruct the growth of nationalism. He cited examples of countries like Canada, Switzerland, and South Africa, which have diverse language populations but still maintain national unity. However, Ambedkar emphasised the importance of a common language to strengthen national unity and resolve cultural and racial conflicts. A single language could help foster a sense of human unity while minimising cultural tensions.

Ambedkar acknowledged that nationality and nationalism are distinct psychological states. Nationality is “a feeling of consciousness of kind” that binds people together, overcoming differences from economic or social conflicts, and separates them from others who are not “of their kind.” Nationality, in Ambedkar's view, becomes nationalism when two conditions are met: (1) a desire to live as a nation, and (2) the creation of a state or cultural home with a defined territory. He believed that political unity alone could not achieve nationalism;



and provides the constitutional structure, including the various systems and organs of government at different levels. Additionally, it describes the rights and duties of the citizens.

The Constitution of India begins with a Preamble, which sets forth the beliefs, objectives, and guiding principles of the document. The salient features of the Constitution have developed directly and indirectly from these objectives, as articulated in the Preamble.

1.1.3.1 The Constituent Assembly

With India's Independence, the Constituent Assembly became a fully sovereign body. Following the partition of India in 1947, the Constituent Assembly had 299 members as of December 31, 1947. Of these, 229 members were elected by the Provincial Assemblies, while the remaining members were nominated by the rulers of the Princely States. The majority of the members in the Constituent Assembly belonged to the Congress Party.

1.1.3.2 The Preamble

As you already know, the Constitution of India begins with a Preamble. Let's understand what a Preamble is. The Preamble is like an introduction or preface to a book. Although it is not an operative part of the Constitution, it outlines the objectives and principles that guided its drafting.

The Preamble briefly explains the goals

of the Constitution in two ways: first, by defining the nature of governance, and second, by highlighting the ideals to be achieved in independent India. For this reason, the Preamble is considered the key to understanding the Constitution.

The objectives laid down in the Preamble are:

- i. The description of India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic (with “Socialist” and “Secular” added by the 42nd Amendment in 1976).
- ii. Provisions to the all-Indian citizens
 - a. Justice: social, economic and political
 - b. Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship
 - c. Equality of status and of opportunity
 - d. Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.

1.1.3.3 Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic

a. Sovereignty

Sovereignty is one of the foremost elements of any independent State. It means absolute independence, i.e., a government which is not controlled by any other power: internal or external. A country cannot have its own constitution without being sovereign. India is a sovereign country. It is free from external control. It can frame its policies. India is free to formulate its own foreign policy.

b. Socialist

The word socialist was not there in the Preamble of the Constitution in its original

form. In 1976, the 42nd amendment to the constitution incorporated ‘Socialist’ and ‘Secular’, in the Preamble. The word ‘Socialism’ had been used in the context of economic planning. It signifies a major role in the economy. It also means commitment to attain ideals like removal of inequalities, provision of minimum basic necessities to all, equal pay for equal work. When you read about the Directive Principles of State Policy, you will see how these ideals have been incorporated as well as partly implemented in the constitution.

c. Secularism

In the context of secularism in India, it is said that “India is neither religious, nor irreligious, nor anti-religious.” What does this imply? It means that India does not have a state religion the government does not promote or favor any particular religion using public funds.

This has two key implications:

- a) Every individual is free to believe in and practice any religion of their choice.
- b) The state will not discriminate against any individual or group based on religion.

d. Democratic Republic

As you have noticed while reading the Preamble to the Constitution, that the constitution belongs to the people of India. The last line of the Preamble says ‘.... Hereby Adopt, Enact and Give to Ourselves This Constitution’. In fact, the Democratic principles of the country flow from this memorable last line of the Preamble. Democracy is generally known as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Effectively this means that the Government is elected by the people, it is responsible and accountable to the people. The democratic principles are highlighted with the provisions of universal



adult franchise, elections, fundamental rights, and responsible government.

The Preamble also declares India as a Republic. It means that the head of the State is the President who is indirectly elected and he is not a hereditary ruler as in the case of the British Monarch.

1.1.3.4 Justice, Liberty and Equality

The struggle for freedom was not only against British rule but also aimed at establishing a just and equitable society. It sought to restore the dignity of all individuals, eliminate poverty, and put an end to all forms of exploitation. These strong motivations and cherished ideals led the framers of the Constitution to emphasize the principles of Justice, Liberty, and Equality for all citizens of India.

a. Justice

Justice ensures that individuals receive what they are rightfully entitled to, including basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, participation in decision-making, and the right to live with dignity. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution encompasses three dimensions of justice—social, economic, and political. Political justice is reflected in the universal adult franchise and the representative form of democracy.

b. Liberty

The Preamble also upholds the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship. These freedoms are safeguarded under the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution. Although economic freedom from want is not explicitly mentioned in the Fundamental Rights, the Directive Principles of State Policy provide guidelines to promote social and economic well-being.

c. Equality

Equality is a fundamental principle of modern democracy. The framers of the Constitution placed great emphasis on the ideal of equality in the Preamble. The Constitution seeks to eliminate all forms of inequality, whether based on class distinctions between rulers and the ruled or discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or birth.

All Indian citizens are entitled to equal treatment before the law and equal protection under the law, without discrimination based on caste, creed, religion, gender, or place of birth. Equality of opportunity ensures that regardless of one's socio-economic background, every individual has an equal chance to develop their potential and choose their means of livelihood.

1.1.3.5 Fraternity, Dignity, Unity and Integrity

Given India's diverse multilingual, multicultural, and multi-religious society—along with the impact of partition—the framers of the Constitution were deeply concerned about maintaining the unity and integrity of the newly independent nation. Ensuring peaceful coexistence among various religious, linguistic, cultural, and economic communities was essential for national harmony.

To emphasise this necessity, the Preamble includes the principles of “dignity of the individual,” “fraternity among people,” and the “unity and integrity of the nation.” These ideals reflect the commitment to fostering social cohesion, mutual respect, and national solidarity.

1.1.3.6 Salient Features of the Constitution

a. Written Constitution

The Indian Constitution is primarily a

written document. A written constitution is one that is drafted at a specific time and adopted on a fixed date as a formal legal document. As you have already studied, the Indian Constitution was framed over a period of two years, eleven months, and eighteen days. It was adopted on November 26, 1949, and came into force on January 26, 1950.

Over time, certain constitutional conventions have evolved, which have been instrumental in the smooth functioning of the Constitution. Unlike India, the British Constitution is an example of an unwritten constitution, as it is based on customs, conventions, and judicial decisions rather than a single written document. The Indian Constitution is also one of the lengthiest in the world. The original Constitution contained 395 Articles and 8 Schedules. Over the years, through various amendments, it has expanded significantly and as of January-2025, Indian Constitution has 448 Articles and 12 Schedules.

b. The Combination of Rigidity and Flexibility

The Indian Constitution is a unique blend of rigidity and flexibility. A constitution is considered rigid or flexible based on its amendment procedure. In a rigid constitution, amending the document is difficult, as seen in the constitutions of the United States, Switzerland, and Australia. In contrast, the British Constitution is considered flexible because its amendment process is simple and straightforward.

The Indian Constitution provides for three types of amendments:

1. By a simple majority – Some provisions can be amended by a simple majority of the members present and voting in both Houses of Parliament before being sent for the President's assent.

2. By a special majority – Certain amendments require a special majority, meaning they must be passed in each House of Parliament by a majority of the total membership of that House and a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. Once passed, they are sent to the President, who cannot withhold assent.
3. By a special majority with state ratification – In addition to the special majority mentioned in the second category, at least 50% of State Legislatures must also approve the amendment before it is sent to the President for assent.

Thus, the Indian Constitution allows amendments through procedures ranging from simple to highly complex, depending on the nature of the proposed change.

c. Federal Polity

India has adopted a federal structure. In a federation, there are two distinct levels of government—one at the national level, known as the Union or Central Government, and the other at the state level, known as the State Government. The United States of America follows a federal system, whereas the United Kingdom (Britain) has a unitary system of government. The Constitution of India does not explicitly use the term “federal state”; instead, it describes India as a “Union of States.” There is a distribution of powers between the Union (Central) Government and the State Governments, which is a key feature of a federal system.

The Constitution provides for three lists of powers:

1. Union List – Subjects on which only the Central Government can legislate.
2. State List – Subjects on which only the State Governments can legislate.



3. Concurrent List – Subjects on which both the Central and State Governments can legislate, but in case of a conflict, the central law prevails.

Based on this division of powers, India can be considered a quasi-federal system—a federation with strong unitary features.

d. Parliamentary Democracy

India follows a parliamentary form of democracy, modeled after the British system. In a parliamentary democracy, there is a close relationship between the legislature and the executive. The Council of Ministers, including the Cabinet, is drawn from among the members of the legislature. In this system, the Head of State is nominal. In India, the President is the Head of State and, while the Constitution grants the President several powers, in practice, these powers are exercised by the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. The President acts on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers.

e. Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties

The Constitution of India guarantees certain rights in the form of Fundamental Rights. These rights are among the key features of the Indian Constitution. Fundamental Rights are justiciable, meaning they are enforceable by the judiciary. If any of these rights are violated, an individual can approach the court of law for their protection.

Fundamental Duties were added to the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976. The Constitution originally listed ten Fundamental Duties for Indian citizens, which were later increased to eleven by the 86th Amendment Act, 2002. While Fundamental Rights grant individuals certain freedoms and protections, Fundamental Duties outline the responsibilities that every citizen is expected to fulfill.

f. The Directive Principles of State Policy

The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), inspired by the Irish Constitution, are another distinctive feature of the Indian Constitution. These principles were included to promote social and economic justice and to establish a welfare state in India. Their objective is to prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and ensure equitable distribution of resources for the benefit of all citizens.

g. Single Integrated Judicial System

India has a single, unified judicial system. At the apex of this system is the Supreme Court, which is the highest judicial authority in the country. Below the Supreme Court are the High Courts, which oversee and supervise the lower courts. The Indian judiciary follows a hierarchical structure, resembling a pyramid:

- The Supreme Court sits at the top.
- The High Courts function at the middle level.
- The subordinate courts (district and lower courts) form the base.

This integrated system ensures uniformity in the interpretation of laws and maintains the rule of law across the country.

1.1.4 The Ideal of Indian Society

Ambedkar presented his notion of ‘Ideal society’ distinct from other scholars with particular context of Indian scenario. For him, “My social philosophy may be said to be enshrined in three words: liberty, equality and fraternity. My philosophy has roots in religion and not in political science. I have derived them from the teachings of my master, the Buddha”. His socioeconomic and political ideas remain significant and pertinent across various historical periods. His vision of an

ideal society reflects his thoughtful, civilised sensibility, profound intellect, and broad perspective. Above all, he was a fervent rationalist and a radical humanist. His conception of an ideal society emphasised dignity, equality, and a harmonious existence for its citizens. Ambedkar's social philosophy was grounded in the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. However, he did not adopt these principles from the French Revolution, but instead, as he asserted, from the teachings of Lord Buddha.

In 1936 he declared that the model of his ideal society must be based on 'Ideal Society' the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity. He equated fraternity with democracy and spelt out the nature of an ideal society. Ambedkar observed:

An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts. In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words, there must be social endosmosis. This is fraternity, which is only another name for democracy. Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. It is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.

Ambedkar's perspective on society differs from that of others. For instance, Aristotle argued that "man is by nature and necessity a social animal," meaning that society is natural, essential, eternal, and universal. He believed society creates an environment that supports not only the fulfillment of basic needs but also personal development. In contrast, Ambedkar did not view society as an organism, as some do. Instead, he saw it

primarily as shaped by human attitudes. For Ambedkar, the key elements that make up a genuine society lie in human relationships and interactions.

He pointed out that while different castes observe similar festivals, these shared celebrations have not been able to unite them into a cohesive society. According to Ambedkar, what truly creates society is when individuals engage in shared activities that evoke similar emotions, making them feel connected in both success and failure. This mutual participation and emotional bond are what form society. Thus, society is defined by the relatively harmonious relationships between people living in a particular area.

As a humanist, Ambedkar did not believe in the supremacy of either the social order or the individual. He argued that society exists within the individual, and the individual cannot exist without society. He supported an integrated view of both. For Ambedkar, neither the individual should dominate society, as capitalism suggests, nor should society overshadow the individual, as communism proposes. Instead, society and the individual are interdependent.

1.1.4.1 Hindu Social Order

Ambedkar's vision highlighted the unjust and exploitative nature of the Hindu religion and social system. He viewed untouchability as a form of socio-religious oppression, where the dominant groups denied basic human rights to the marginalised. He traced the root of the problem to the structure of Hindu society, which he believed was a consequence of the varna system. Ambedkar argued that untouchability was a by product of both the varna and caste systems, and as long as the caste system persisted, untouchables would continue to exist. Toward the end of his life, Ambedkar became convinced that the only way to liberate the outcastes was to dismantle the entire caste system. For

years, he worked to improve the conditions of untouchables through various struggles, asserting that the salvation of the oppressed classes would only occur when caste Hindus were made to recognise and change their discriminatory attitudes. He called for a revolution in the mindset of caste Hindus.

Ambedkar identified three core principles that upheld the existing social order:

1. The principle of graded inequality, which divides society not only horizontally into countless castes and sub-castes but also vertically, which worsens the divisions.
2. The fixity of occupations.
3. The fixity of people's status within their respective castes, meaning one's caste or class is determined by birth, not by ability.

Later in life, B.R. Ambedkar deeply studied Buddhism and embraced it as a path to social equality and justice. He believed that true religion should uphold human dignity and promote social well-being. For him, Buddhism's principles of compassion, morality, and justice provided a strong foundation for an equitable and just society, free from discrimination and oppression.

1.1.4.2 Ambedkar and the Ideal Society

The three principles identified by Ambedkar essentially convey the same idea: society should be built upon the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity. To grasp Ambedkar's vision of a just society, it is crucial to comprehend the meaning of these three principles. However, it is also important to consider the context in which the need for such a just or ideal society emerged in Ambedkar's thinking. He observed the following about an ideal society:

The questions to be asked in determining what an ideal society are: How Ideal Society numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared by the groups? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of associations? Are the forces that separate groups and classes more numerous than the forces that unite? What social significance is attached to this group life?

Ambedkar envisions a society that is diverse in nature but not stagnant, inflexible, traditional, or orthodox in its behavior. This society would offer equal opportunities for progress to everyone and unite all individuals through a shared cultural connection. As he put it, "Ethically, all people are heterogeneous. It is the unity of culture that forms the basis of homogeneity." This cultural unity, he believed, could only be achieved in a society founded on liberty, equality, and fraternity. In his work *Annihilation of Caste*, Ambedkar outlines his vision of an ideal society. He highlights how this vision is highly relevant to the Indian society, which is divided into various castes and religious communities. Each caste group tends to form its own unique sense of unity, which is influenced by the level of communication and participation within the group. In his words:

An ideal society should be mobile, should be full of channels for conveying a change taking place in one part to other parts (means communication or what is happening at one part and it should be convey to another part). In an ideal society there should be many interests consciously communicated and shared. There should be varied and free points of contact with other modes of association. In other words there must be social endosmosis.

Ambedkar not only called for the complete abolition of caste and caste-based society

but also proposed a model for an ideal or “just society.” In defining this ideal society, he identified several key principles. First, he emphasised that the individual is an end in themselves, and that the primary purpose of society is to foster the growth and development of the individual’s personality. Society should not dominate the individual, and any subordination to society should only occur when it serves the individual’s betterment and only to the necessary extent. The second principle is that the relationships among members of society should be governed by the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The third fundamental principle is that the society must be based on democratic values, ensuring political, economic, and social justice through constitutional measures and by dismantling the monopoly of the upper classes over political power. On 25th November 1949, Ambedkar stated:

There can be no gain saying that political power in this country has too long been the monopoly of a few and the many are not only beasts of burden, but also beasts of prey. This monopoly has not merely deprived them of their chance of betterment; it has shaped them of what may be called the significance of the life. These down-trodden people are tired of being governed. They aspire to govern themselves. The urge for self-realization in the down-trodden classes must not be allowed to develop into a class struggle or class war. This can only be done by the establishment of equality and fraternity in all walks of life.

A central theme in the writings of B.R. Ambedkar was the pursuit of social justice and the creation of a just society, which, for him, was fundamentally a casteless society. He not only offered a sharp critique of the existing social order but also proposed an

alternative vision and model for social organisation based on justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, and the abolition of caste. In his discussions of the ideal society, Ambedkar delves into the meanings of liberty, equality, and fraternity in several of his works.

Liberty: Ambedkar viewed liberty as encompassing both civil and political freedom. Civil liberty includes the freedom of movement, speech (which also covers thought, reading, writing, and discussion), and action. Political liberty involves the individual’s right to participate in the creation of laws and in the formation and dissolution of governments.

Equality: The fundamental and universal traits shared by all humans are encapsulated in the concept of “moral equality.” This concept asserts that every individual is entitled to ethical recognition and the respect of their rights, emphasising that a society that disregards human dignity is akin to a group of robbers.

Fraternity: Ambedkar defined fraternity as a sense of fellow feeling. It is a sentiment that leads individuals to align their well-being with the well-being of others, so that the welfare of others becomes just as naturally and necessarily important as any of the physical aspects of our existence. He described fraternity as “an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen.”

In his pursuit of equality and justice, Ambedkar made significant efforts to secure socio-economic protections for the oppressed and marginalised groups. He submitted a memorandum to the First Round Table Conference (1930) in London, which outlined several valid and well-reasoned proposals for creating a modern and just society. However, Ambedkar was skeptical about the realisation of a truly just society, believing that political equality alone would not be sufficient to improve the welfare of the Shudras and other marginalised



communities. He argued that true progress for these groups could only be achieved through socio-economic equality. While participating in the Constituent Assembly debates, he observed:

On 26th January, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principles of one-man one vote, and one-vote one-value. In our social and economic life, we shall, be reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principles of one-man one-value. How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of democracy which this Constituent Assembly has so laboriously built up.

Ambedkar believed that Buddhism fulfilled the criteria of a religion with a social vision and a scientific outlook. It

offered solutions to the problems faced by the oppressed millions, championed equality and individual freedom, and emphasised love and compassion. He was not only seeking a casteless religion but also an ideal, scientific religion and society, which he found in Buddhism. In his article “*Buddha and the Future of His Religion*,” Ambedkar viewed religion as a force that shapes society through morality. He outlined three essential criteria for any religion:

- It must align with science,
- It must uphold the core principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity,
- It must not glorify or perpetuate poverty.

Let us sum up the discussion with BR Ambedkar’s statement democracy was not a form of government: it was essentially a form of society. It may not be necessary for a democratic society to be marked by unity, by community of purpose, by loyalty to public ends and by mutuality of sympathy. But it does unmistakably involve two things. The first is an attitude of mind, an attitude of respect and equality towards their fellows. The second is a social organisation free from rigid social barriers.

Recap

- ◆ Gandhi emphasises the true meaning of Swaraj (nation) as a mental and physical state.
- ◆ Swaraj as an external condition entails political independence from foreign dominance and a lifetime commitment to improving the Indian people’s material conditions of poverty and caste oppression.
- ◆ The Constitution of India was framed by the Constituent Assembly on January 26, 1950.

- ◆ The establishment, maintenance, acquisition, and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory is known as colonialism
- ◆ Economically, the Industrial Revolution aided English merchants in acquiring a large amount of money from Asia, Africa, and America
- ◆ The Vedas, which were written in Sanskrit, were available only to Brahmins.
- ◆ The practice of Sati, was outlawed in 1829 by Lord Bentinck, the Governor General at the time.
- ◆ A law passed in 1856 allowed widows to remarry.
- ◆ Inter-caste and inter-communal marriages were legalised in 1872.
- ◆ In 1929, the Sharda Act was passed, prohibiting child marriage.
- ◆ Valentine Chirol, in his book *Indian Unrest*, claimed that India was a “mere geographical expression”.
- ◆ Radha Kumud Mookerji popularised the idea that India had been great and unified since ancient times in his book *Fundamental Unity of India* (1914) and other works
- ◆ Rabindranath Tagore, depicted India as a civilisation where various invaders, such as Greeks, Shakas, Huns, Turks, Persians, Afghans, and others, came and assimilated into its ethos.
- ◆ Gandhi refused the popular belief that is India became a nation under British rule.
- ◆ Gandhi’s claimed that India is a nation is based on two assumptions
- ◆ Gandhi defined nationalism as self-rule in which the entire community, not just the elite, is free and active.
- ◆ Ambedkar’s nationalism stems from his sense of dignity for both the people and the country.
- ◆ According to Ambedkar, nationalism is a process of social assimilation that expresses a people’s inner unity.
- ◆ Nationality and nationalism are two distinct psychological states of mind, there can be no nationalism without a sense of belonging.
- ◆ Nationality, according to Ambedkar, is “a feeling of consciousness of kind”.
- ◆ The Constituent Assembly, following the partition of the India in 1947, consisted of 299 contributors as on 31st December 1947.
- ◆ In 1976, the 42nd amendment to the constitution incorporated ‘Socialist’ and ‘Secular’, in the Preamble.
- ◆ The Directive Principles of State Policy have been adopted from the Irish Constitution.
- ◆ Ambedkar’s vision highlighted the unjust and exploitative nature of the Hindu religion and social system.

- ◆ Ambedkar viewed untouchability as a form of socio-religious oppression.
- ◆ Ambedkar's writings largely aimed at creating an "ideal society," a "caste-less society," or a society founded on the "principles of justice".

Objective Questions

1. Who outlawed the Sati system in 1829?
2. When inter-communal marriages were legalized?
3. Who authored the book '*Indian Unrest*'?
4. *The Fundamental Unity of India* was authored by?
5. Who introduced the concept of '*Daya*' ?
6. Who described Ambedkar as a symbol of revolt?
7. In which year the Constituent Assembly was formed?
8. In which amendment, the words 'socialist and secular' were added to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution?
9. From which constitution, the directive principles of state policy were adopted?
10. Who authored *Annihilation of Caste*?

Answers

1. Lord Bentinck
2. 1872
3. Valentine Chirol
4. Radha Kumud Mookerji
5. Tulsidas
6. Jawaharlal Nehru
7. 1946
8. 42nd
9. Irish Constitution
10. Dr. BR Ambedkar

Assignments

1. Discuss the main differences between the colonialist and nationalist views on Indian nationalism and national movement.
2. Compare the approach of Gandhi and Ambedkar on nationalism and colonialism.
3. Prepare a note on the importance of the Constitution, explaining the meaning and relevance of secularism in Indian context, philosophy of the Indian Constitution with reference to the Preamble of the Constitution.
4. Explain the process and method of colonization .
5. Examine the salient features of Indian Constitution.

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Suggested Reading

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BLOCK

Social Institutions



UNIT

Family, Marriage and Kinship: Structural Changes and Regional Variations

Learning Outcomes

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

- ◆ familiarise themselves with major social institutions of Indian society and their transformations
- ◆ comprehend the concepts of family and marriage and their structural changes
- ◆ explore kinship usages and their regional variations

Prerequisites

Think of a marriage in your locality. Where do the couples stay after their marriage? You will find that the newly married will move to their family home and live in a joint family system. But things are different in many of foreign countries and in some states too. After the marriage, the couples will move to their newly constructed or purchased home and live as a nuclear family. Family and marriage are fundamental social institutions that shape human relationships, socialization, and cultural continuity. The family serves as the primary unit for emotional support, economic cooperation, and child-rearing, while marriage is a socially recognised union that establishes rights and obligations between spouses and their kin. Over time, these institutions have undergone significant structural changes due to factors such as industrialisation, urbanisation, globalisation, and shifting gender roles. Traditional extended family structures have given way to nuclear families in many societies, while diversified family forms, including single-parent households, cohabitation, and same-sex marriages, have gained recognition. These transformations reflect broader social, economic, and ideological shifts that continue to redefine the meaning and function of family and marriage.

Kinship is a fundamental aspect of social organization that defines relationships based on blood, marriage, and adoption, shaping inheritance, residence, and social obligations. In India, kinship structures exhibit significant regional variations influenced by factors such as caste, religion, and historical traditions. Broadly, northern India follows a patrilineal and exogamous kinship system, where marriage outside one's kin group (gotra) is emphasized, reinforcing hierarchical social structures. While the southern India features a more flexible kinship system, with cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages being common, reflecting localized customs. Matrilineal traditions persist in communities like the Nairs of Kerala and the Khasis of Meghalaya, where lineage and inheritance pass through the mother's line. These regional differences highlight the diversity of kinship practices in India, shaped by cultural continuity and social change.

Keywords

Social institution, Endogamy, Polygamy, Patriarchal, Neolocal, Joking relationship, Avoidance

Discussion

Now, what is meant by a social institution? You may have learned about it in the first semester and become familiar with various types of social institutions and their characteristics. Institutions are established patterns of behavior that fulfill specific societal needs. When a particular way of acting or behaving is repeated over a period of time, it gains acceptance among members of society and gradually becomes an established pattern, which is termed an "institution." Each such pattern of action or behavior emerges because it serves certain social functions. For example, economic institutions fulfill the material needs of people, while political institutions govern and administer society. Various social institutions perform different functions, such as ensuring the continuation of society, regulating sexual behavior, establishing the basic cooperative unit of society, and ensuring the continuation of the human species. Additionally, institutions help people cope with the fear of the unknown and the supernatural and provide structured

ways of forming social relationships within groups and society. Institutions persist and continue to exist because they are socially sanctioned.

Man is a social animal. He lives and dies in society. No human being develops in isolation and away from the society. According to MacIver, society is a network of social relations or a web of social relationships. Society is a combination of various groups, such as groups formed of human beings-families, social classes, sex and age groups, institutions, associations and communities. It possesses different groups of people based on their occupations, castes, languages, religions, races with certain geographical limits and with social relations among its individuals.

In all human groups the family is the most important primary group. It is a small social group consisting ordinarily of a father, mother, and one or more children. Historically it has undergone several changes emerging,

according to Burgess and Locke, from a hard and fast social structure or institution and becoming a flexible human relationship. The word “family” has been taken over from the Roman word, “famulus”, meaning a servant. In Roman law, the word denoted the group of producers and slaves and other servants as well as members connected by common descent or marriage.

2.1.1 Family: Structural Changes

Down through the ages, so it has seemed, the family has been a fundamental and persistent social group, a basic social institution at the very core of society. The values institutionalized in the family have long been regarded as important enough to warrant strong measures against any behaviour that violated them. Not only has the family been defined as fundamental to the existence of society, but it has been viewed as a source of morality and decent conduct. It has also been defined as a primary force for controlling behaviour and civilizing the human animal. In the first semester, we have discussed various dimensions of family including definitions, types, nature and characteristics. Here will delve into the essential components of structural and functional peculiarities of family and its changes in the contemporary society.

The family is the fundamental unit of social structure in all societies. Whether in simple or complex modern societies, it plays a crucial role in shaping individuals through the process of socialisation. Its structure, level of independence, and the rules that govern and sustain it vary across different social settings. The family possesses several key characteristics, including its universal presence across cultures and historical periods. Its biological and social functions make it essential for societal continuity. Each family follows a unique way of life based on its social structure and moral values, which

change over time and across different regions. It is primarily formed to regulate sexual behavior and provide care and protection for children. Due to these essential roles, the family is considered both a universal institution and an indispensable part of human society.

Sociologists define the family in various ways, emphasising its nature and functions, such as sexual, reproductive, economic, and educational roles. It is often described as a group formed through marital relationships, characterised by shared responsibilities of parenthood, common living arrangements, and mutual relationships between parents and children. Some sociologists define the family as a social group marked by shared residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. In simpler terms, the family is viewed as an adult male and female cohabiting with their offspring in a relatively permanent relationship, typically sanctioned by society through marriage. These definitions highlight four fundamental features of the family as a unique social group:

1. A sexual relationship exists between adults of opposite sexes.
2. The members live together or cohabit.
3. The relationship is expected to have a degree of permanence.
4. The relationship is culturally recognised and legitimised through societal approval, typically in the form of marriage.

2.1.1.1 Functions of Family

The reasons for the endurance and universality of the family are largely grounded in the functions that it performs for individuals and for society. The major functions the family accomplishes are discussed below:



This shift is largely driven by modernisation, which is reshaping Indian society.

Industrialisation and urbanisation have played a key role in weakening the joint family structure, as it was better suited to agricultural societies. In an agrarian economy, families functioned as units of production, but industrialisation has diminished this role. As people migrate from villages to cities in search of jobs in emerging industries, they sever ties with their joint families. This transition to an industry-based economy has undermined the foundation of the joint family system. The process has been further accelerated by advancements in transportation and communication. Improved bus and train services have made it easier for individuals to move from rural areas to urban centers for work. Additionally, the widespread availability of mobile phones and telecom facilities allow family members to stay connected without living under the same roof. As a result, reliance on traditional family occupations—once crucial for the survival of the joint family—has declined, leading more people to seek better employment opportunities in cities.

The influence of Western countries has played a significant role in transforming the joint family system in India. In Western societies, the nuclear family structure is the norm, as it is based on values such as freedom, equality, love between spouses, and open communication. In contrast, the Indian joint family system offers limited scope for these ideals. As a result, the younger generation in India increasingly prefers nuclear families. In response, joint families are attempting to adapt by decentralising authority and granting more independence to individual members. Despite these efforts, westernisation has significantly diminished the importance of the joint family system.

Another major factor contributing to this

The traditional joint family system in India is undergoing significant changes and gradually moving toward disintegration.



shift is the empowerment of Indian women through education and employment, which has allowed them to break free from male domination. The conservative and often restrictive environment of joint families posed challenges to women's independence and growth. Traditionally, women held a lower status within the joint family structure, and their rising social and economic position is directly linked to its decline. Therefore, the increasing status of women has had an unintended but significant impact on weakening the joint family system in India.

The joint family system in India has faced significant challenges due to progressive social legislations introduced during British rule and after independence. Laws such as the Civil Marriage Act of 1872, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, and the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 have weakened the dominance of the joint family structure. These legislations empowered women by granting them rights related to marriage, divorce, and property inheritance. This shift disrupted the traditional joint family system, where women previously had limited rights and respect. As a result, joint families have had to adapt, leading to greater recognition of women's rights. However, the trend is increasingly shifting toward nuclear families, as they offer young couples more privacy and independence.

Another major factor contributing to the decline of joint families is the shortage of residential space in urban areas. Unlike villages, where small homes were surrounded by open spaces, cities and towns have limited housing, making it difficult for large families to live together. Consequently, smaller family units have become the norm.

Frequent disputes among family members, particularly among women from different backgrounds, have also played a role in the decline of joint families. To avoid such conflicts, many people have chosen to live

in nuclear families, where interpersonal tensions are reduced.

Despite these changes, scholars argue that the joint family system is not disappearing entirely but rather evolving. Empirical studies by sociologists such as I.P. Desai, K.M. Kapadia, Aileen Ross, M.S. Gore, A.M. Shah, and Sachchidananda indicate that while the traditional joint family structure is weakening, it is not being completely replaced by nuclear families. Instead, joint families are becoming smaller, with a maximum of three generations living together. This new form of joint family is more compact and functional, typically including only siblings and the father's brothers, rather than large extended families spread across multiple generations.

2.1.2.2 Decline of Family as a Social Institution

As long as there has been sociology, the family has been regarded as a social institution and a significant social group. Nonetheless, early sociologists gave little direct attention to such smaller social units as the family in their analysis of society. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the study of the family was carried on by anthropologists and archaeologists, who examined it in preliterate culture as well as in ancient civilizations. A great amount of data about the family in other times and places, though primarily Western, was amassed in G. E. Howard's *A History of Matrimonial Institutions* Chiefly in England and the United States, published in three volumes in 1904. By the turn of the century the study of the family was well established in the burgeoning social sciences, and there was as well a highly relativistic perspective that recognized great differences in the family in different places and at different times. Perhaps Edward A. Westermarck's *The History of Human Marriage* was the climax to this relatively

objective, historical, anthropological, as well as relativistic approach to the family. When American sociologists, particularly after 1920, gave serious attention to the family, a strong basis for a comparative perspective on the family as a social institution had already been established.

From then until now, the study of the family as a sociological interest has flourished; there has been a vast amount of research on the modern American family and a steady stream of textbooks on the sociology of family and marriage. During this period certain persistent sociological problems have remained in the forefront of scholarly concern:

1. the universality of the family
2. the family as a social institution with appropriate social functions
3. industrialisation and the changing modern family
4. the effect of stratification on the family
5. the relation of family status to other social roles of women
6. the future of the family in advanced industrial societies.

The concern about the universality of the family as a social institution reflects a fundamental scholarly interest in the family as a human pattern that appears in (presumably) all cultures, regardless of its varying forms and functions. The very process of defining the family in universal rather than particularistic Western terms depend on an adequate description of what constitutes family structures across all known human societies, both past and present. However, American sociologists have primarily focused on the modern American family, particularly the middle-class family. Their concern with the effects of social stratification on the family has, in turn, heightened their

awareness of the potential error of defining the urban, middle-class American family as representative of the American family as a whole. This recognition has introduced a comparative perspective into research within the American context, encouraging scholars to examine family structures across different social classes.

Then, lastly, the concern about the relation of industrialisation to the family reflects a persistent interest in the long-term effect of industrialisation upon the structure of the western family and the deep concern over its possible disorganisation as an institution, if not an actual group. This concern also reflects the treating of the family as a social problem in modern society.

2.1.3 Marriage in Indian Society

Marriage is a universal social institution that establishes a socially recognised, long-term heterosexual relationship for procreation and child-rearing. It plays a crucial role in regulating human reproduction by legitimising children born within marriage, which is essential for inheritance and succession. Additionally, marriage leads to the formation of the family, a stable social unit responsible for nurturing and educating children. Historically, marriage has served as an institutional mechanism for replenishing societal members, thereby ensuring both human survival and societal continuity.

Another significant purpose of marriage is to provide companionship, along with emotional and psychological support. However, the emphasis on companionship as a key aspect of marriage is a relatively modern concept. Traditionally, societies have regarded marriage as a social obligation embedded with various familial, social, and economic responsibilities. Across different cultures and historical periods, marriage has existed in diverse forms, reflecting various social structures and traditions.



2.1.3.1 Marriage: Structural Changes

As a social institution, marriage has undergone various changes over time. In modern times, industrialisation and urbanisation have had a significant impact on the institution of marriage worldwide. In India, different communities and caste groups follow unique rules and customs related to marriage. Each group has adapted differently to the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. However, despite these differences, certain common changes in the institution of marriage can be observed across Indian society.

Over the past two decades, Indian society has undergone a significant transformation in its norms and traditions. This shift has been observed across all groups, regardless of religion, caste, or class. Traditional practices are no longer followed as rigidly as before. New forms of relationships and marriages are now gaining both legal and cultural acceptance. This section explores some of these key changes. These changes in marriage can be categorised as follows:

1. Forms of marriage
2. Mate selection
3. Age at marriage
4. Rituals and customs
5. Goals and stability of marriage.

1. Changes in the Forms of Marriage

Different societies have traditionally practiced various forms of marriage. However, societies that once embraced plural marriages are now shifting towards monogamy. This shift can be attributed to the overall improvement in women's status and their gradual liberation from male dominance. Even in societies where polygamy was once

allowed, the occurrence of polygamous marriages and multiple wives has been declining. In India, the Hindu Marriage Act has prohibited both polygynous and polyandrous marriages. The trend toward monogamy has also been influenced by the rise of romantic love as the foundation of marriage, a concept popularized by Western societies. In this model, marriage is based on the idea that one person is the ideal partner.

a. Changes in Mate Selection

In traditional societies like India, mate selection was solely the responsibility of parents and elders. However, young men and women are now increasingly given a say in choosing their partners. What was once a situation where individuals had no input in their marriage decisions has evolved into a stage where their opinions are sought and their consent is obtained. In urban middle-class families, sons and daughters now even have the right to reject marriage proposals made by others. In India, the practice of mate selection through newspaper advertisements has become popular among the urban middle class, and a more recent development involves the use of computer technology to match potentially compatible partners.

b. Inter-Caste Marriages

Inter-caste marriage refers to the union of a husband and wife from different castes. Traditionally, Indian society has discouraged individuals from marrying outside their caste. Even today, most marriages in India are arranged based on Jatis (castes) and Up-Jatis (sub-castes), reinforcing the deep connection between marriage and the caste system, which has religious roots. However, this does not mean that inter-caste marriages are nonexistent. In fact, they are gradually increasing due to factors such as education, employment opportunities, the rise of the middle class, economic changes, and rural-to-urban migration.

Despite this progress, India remains a largely traditional society with strong caste and religious structures that significantly influence marriage choices. For many, marrying outside their caste is still a distant possibility. A 2014 survey found that only about 5% of marriages in India were inter-caste, indicating slow but steady progress toward breaking caste-based barriers. While inter-caste marriages are a relatively modern phenomenon, significant change is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, they have the potential to weaken the caste system, both in urban and rural areas, over time. Inter-caste marriages are of two types: (i) Hypergamy or Anuloma: These types of marriages take place between men of higher caste (Varna) and women of lower caste (Varna) and (ii) Hypogamy or Pratiloma: These types of marriages take place between men of lower caste (Varna) and women of higher caste (Varna).

c. Inter-religion Marriages

Inter-religion marriage, also known as inter-faith marriage, is traditionally referred to as a “mixed marriage.” It occurs between a man and a woman who follow different religions or faiths. Legally, such marriages are generally recognized as civil contracts between two individuals, though in some cases, they may also be considered religious unions. It is important to note that inter-religion marriages are distinct from concepts like spiritual integration, social integration, sacred secession, and apostasy. However, these ideas are still linked to various aspects of inter-faith unions in some way. While most religions do not fully recognize inter-religion marriages, they may permit them under specific conditions.

d. Special Marriage Act

India does not have a specific law to govern inter-religion marriages. To address this gap, the Special Marriage Act was enacted in 1954. This legislation was designed to facilitate marriages between individuals from different

castes or religions. A key feature of this Act is that marriages conducted under it are not governed by personal religious laws. The Special Marriage Act stands out because it is independent of religious affiliation, making it applicable to anyone choosing to marry outside their caste or religion. This law extends beyond those who marry or register under it—it applies to all Indian citizens, promoting awareness about legal provisions for marriage and helping inter-caste and inter-religion unions gain both legal recognition and social acceptance.

e. Live in Relationship

A live-in relationship is an arrangement in which an unmarried couple resides together for an extended period, similar to a marriage, but without formal legal recognition. In this setup, partners live as if they are married, though their union is not acknowledged under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, or any other personal laws in India. The key difference between marriage and a live-in relationship is that marriage emphasizes commitment and mutual adaptation, whereas live-in relationships prioritize personal freedom. The only legal framework that provides limited protection in such cases is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

f. Same-Sex Marriage

Same-gender marriage, also known as gay or homosexual marriage, refers to the union of two individuals of the same gender, such as two men or two women. Although it follows the same legal procedures as heterosexual marriages, many countries around the world do not officially recognize these unions. As a result, partners in such marriages often do not attain the legal status of a spouse within the legal system.

According to Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, consensual sexual relations between individuals of the same sex were considered a criminal offense. This law was



introduced by the British in 1861 across their colonies, based on the belief that such acts were against natural law. Those found guilty under this provision faced severe penalties, including life imprisonment. In 2018, the Supreme Court of India overturned this colonial-era law, decriminalizing consensual same-sex relationships. In a unanimous verdict, the court affirmed that LGBTQ individuals have the same fundamental rights as all other citizens. The ruling emphasized the importance of individual identity, calling for the elimination of injustice, the adoption of progressive changes, and the guarantee of equal rights. With this decision, India joined 17 other Commonwealth nations that had repealed similar laws, breaking away from the British-imposed legal tradition. The Supreme Court recognized that adults have the right to marry a partner of their choice without coercion. Following the verdict, legal experts have argued that discrimination against same-sex marriages or individuals should be deemed unlawful.

II. Changes in Age of Marriage

In India, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, commonly known as the Sarda Act, was enacted in 1929 to curb the practice of child marriage. Traditionally, child marriages were widely accepted in India, but social reformers made persistent efforts to eliminate this practice. While the act was an important legal step, child marriage did not immediately come to an end and has continued in some regions despite legal restrictions.

Over time, with the increasing enrollment of girls in schools and colleges, their growing aspirations for employment, and the challenges many boys face in establishing financial stability, the average age at marriage has gradually risen. Additionally, the Indian government has set the legal minimum age for marriage at 18 for girls and 21 for boys under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. In urban areas, marriages typically

occur later than these prescribed legal ages due to factors such as higher education, career priorities, and shifting societal norms.

III. Changes in Marriage Rituals and Customs

In India, marriage rituals and customs are increasingly returning to traditional practices. Many rituals and customs, which seemed to lose their prominence shortly after independence, are now experiencing a revival. This revival can partly be attributed to growing affluence, as many people now have the financial means to spend generously on weddings. Additionally, there is a trend among those with lesser means to imitate the extravagant weddings of the more affluent.

IV. Changes in the Goals and Stability of Marriage

In traditional societies, the primary purpose of marriage was procreation, and having a large family was often a cherished goal. However, modern living conditions have made large families increasingly burdensome, with even families with three or four children being less favored. India was the first country to implement an official family planning program, and this initiative has gradually influenced people's values. It is now widely recognized that it is preferable to have two healthy, well-cared-for children rather than a larger number who cannot be properly supported. As the importance of procreation and the parenting role declines, other aspects of marriage, such as companionship and emotional support from spouses and children, have become more central. Today, many young people view marriage as a means to achieve happiness and personal fulfillment.

2.1.4 Kinship: Regional Variations

In the previous sections, we explored the social institutions of family and marriage in India. To fully understand the social relationships within family and marriage,

it is essential to examine the rules, norms, and patterns that govern these relationships. Kinship plays a crucial role in shaping these relationships by establishing these rules, norms, and patterns.

Here, we will introduce the concept of kinship and its role in Indian society and will examine the significance of kinship and its regional variations in Indian social life. Before delving into the specific focus of the section, we will first define the concept of kinship and other related concepts, such as descent, inheritance, residence rules, patriarchy, and matriarchy. Finally, we will explore the kinship system in India and its variations.

Kinship is a system of social relationships based on both marital (affinal) and blood (consanguinal) ties. We tend to view the kinship system we are born into, and into which we marry, as natural. We also believe that certain close relatives should be forbidden as marriage or sexual partners, and any violation of these taboos is thought to lead to severe social and other consequences. Society and culture shape our ideas about the correct and proper behaviors that kin should have toward one another. These aspects of kinship are often taken for granted, unless we encounter the kinship practices of other cultures. When we do, these practices may seem completely different and can sometimes appear disturbing, inhumane, exotic, strange, or primitive.

In the early development of sociology and anthropology, scholars spent considerable time studying the cultural and social aspects of kinship. They sought to understand the different stages through which they believed kinship systems evolved throughout human history. Analysing the kinship system within a society helped anthropologists uncover the dominant structural characteristics of that society. For them, the kinship system refers to a group of people recognized as

relatives, either through a blood relationship (consanguinity) or a marriage relationship (affinity). For example, relationships between a mother and her child, between siblings, or between a father and his child are consanguinal, while relationships between in-laws, such as a father or mother-in-law and son or daughter-in-law, are affinal.

Modern sociology focused on studying the breakdown of community, with the decline of kinship solidarities seen as an inevitable result of economic specialisation and bureaucratic rationalization tied to modernity and industrial growth. In India, Irawati Karve, in her book *Kinship Organization in India* (1952), conducted extensive fieldwork across various regions of the country. Her knowledge of Sanskrit also allowed her to access valuable data in scriptures, legal texts, and epics. According to various scholars, the social recognition of kin relationships is often considered more important than the biological connections themselves. In India, networks based on kinship relationships play a vital role in both rural and urban social life.

India is a diverse country, with a variety of communities and regions, leading to a wide range of kinship systems across these areas. It is challenging to provide a detailed account of the kinship systems in every community and culture. Instead, we can examine the broader differences between the kinship systems in the north and south. Sociological literature in India has highlighted the characteristics of North and South Indian kinship systems. However, this does not imply that there is a single uniform system; there are still multiple variations of kinship systems within both North and South India.

Sociologists and social anthropologists have used various approaches to study kinship systems in different regions. These approaches can generally be categorised into two main types:



1. The Indological approach, also known as the “book view” approach
2. The Anthropological approach, or the “field view” approach

form the foundation of the kinship system in society. Sociological and anthropological studies examine these two dimensions to understand both the continuities and changes within India's kinship system.

1. Indological Approach

The Indological approach relies on classical textual sources to understand Indian society. Early sociological analyses used these texts to explain the ideological and legal foundations of kinship systems and institutions. For instance, K.M. Kapadia utilised classical texts to describe Hindu kinship, while P.H. Prabhu in his book *Hindu Social Organisation* employed Sanskrit texts to understand kinship in Indian society. Irawati Karve and G.S. Ghurye extensively used textual sources to explain kinship patterns in different regions of India and to explore various socio-historical perspectives on the Indian kinship system. In India, the Indological approach has provided a framework to analyse both the continuity and changes within the kinship system.

2. Anthropological Approach

This approach emphasises fieldwork and gathering data directly from the ground to understand various aspects of kinship. As discussed in the field view approach, anthropological studies on kinship have provided a clear understanding of kinship in India and have helped map both the continuity and changes within the kinship system. Anthropologists have examined kinship systems from two perspectives:

- The descent approach
- The alliance approach

Descent and alliance are two key ways through which individuals in society are connected and kin relationships are formed. These relationships, established first through blood ties and second through marital ties,

a. Descent Approach

In our society, groups are recognised or defined based on shared descent. Each individual belongs to a cooperative and tightly-knit group, where mutual support and assistance can be relied upon. These local groups are generally larger than basic families consisting of spouses and their children. There are six possible ways for the transmission of descent group membership from parents to children. These are:

- Patrilineal, where descent is traced through the male line, from father to son.
- Matrilineal, where descent is traced through the female line, from mother to daughter.
- Double (duolineal or bilineal), where descent is traced through both the father's and the mother's lines for different attributes, such as movable property through one line and immovable property through the other.
- Cognatic (bilateral) - In this system, attributes are passed equally through both parents. No unilineal groups are formed, but the group structure can be cognatic, meaning kinship is recognized on both the father's and the mother's side. Membership can be acquired through either parent.
- Parallel descent - This is a rare form of descent where the lines are sex-specific. Men pass down descent to their sons, while women pass it down to their daughters.



- Cross or alternative descent - This is another rare form, where men transmit descent to their daughters and women to their sons.

The examination and analysis of kin relationships within a descent group have provided a thorough sociological understanding of certain types of kinship systems in India. In this context, we typically encounter patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems, with the patrilineal system being more prevalent.

b. Alliance Approach

Alliance plays a crucial role in the study of kinship systems in India. Kinship involves examining the patterns and rules surrounding marriage. When a sociologist focuses specifically on marital relationships and various aspects of kinship, it is referred to as the alliance approach to understanding kinship patterns. Many studies of kinship in India have emphasised marriage as an alliance between two groups, as well as kinship terminology, which reflects the nature of such alliances. These studies are considered to follow the alliance approach due to their focus on relationships formed through marriage.

The primary proponent of this approach is Louis Dumont. He highlighted the significant role that marriage plays in the kinship systems of South India. By demonstrating the contrast between consanguines and affines as reflected in Dravidian kinship terminology, Dumont made a crucial contribution to our understanding of kinship in India, particularly in the South. He applied a structural theory of kinship to the South Indian context.

2.1.4.1 Features of Kinship in Various Zones

As we mentioned, India is vast in geography and culturally diverse, making the study of kinship across different communities

and groups a challenging task. In her book *Kinship Organisation in India*, Irawati Karve divided the country into four cultural zones for studying the Indian kinship system: the Northern, Central, Southern, and Eastern zones.

The northern zone stretches from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya Mountain ranges in the south. The majority of the people in this region speak languages that have their roots in Sanskrit, including Hindi, Bihari, Sindhi, Punjabi, Assamese, and Bengali. Sociologists and anthropologists have used the descent approach to analyse the kinship system in North India, focusing on four key aspects of kin relationships. In the next section, we will briefly discuss these four aspects.

a. Kinship Groups

Kin relationships serve as a means of transferring status and property from one generation to the next, while also forming effective social groups for cooperation and conflict. To understand these relationships, it is important to identify the form of descent or the way kinship ties are traced. This helps to determine the social groups within which relatives interact, both cooperatively and competitively, and these groups make up kinship groups.

b. Kinship Terminology

The terms people use to refer to their kin relationships reflect the structure of the kinship system. By analysing kinship terminology, we can gain insight into how the kinship system operates. The way kinship terms are used often reveals the characteristics of the kinship system, as individuals typically use the same term for relatives who belong to the same category of kin relationships, and these relatives tend to occupy similar kinship roles.



c. Marriage Rules

Just as kinship groups define the structure of a society's kinship system, marriage rules — including the categories of people who can or cannot marry one another, and the relationships between the bride-takers and bride-givers — establish the framework in which kin relationship's function. Discussing these aspects helps to understand the dynamics of kin relationships. Therefore, understanding marriage rules is essential for grasping any kinship system.

d. Exchange of Gifts

Sociologists often describe social relationships between various categories of relatives, recognizing that kinship behavior involves pairs of individuals. For example, the parent-child relationship describes kinship behavior across two generations. Such descriptions are possible only when studying the kinship system of a specific social group. A focus on the exchange of gifts among relatives provides insight into the behavioral aspects of kinship. This discussion helps us understand how kinship groups interact and how individuals fulfill their roles within the kinship system.

I. Kinship Features in Northern Zone

The kinship system is closely associated with socio-cultural factors such as language, caste, and geographic region (plain or hilly areas). Additionally, kinship organization can be understood collectively based on caste and geographical zones. While kinship practices in northern India vary slightly by region and caste, a comparative analysis reveals a general northern pattern that encompasses widely shared customs and attitudes. The key characteristics of kinship organization in the northern zone include:

Individuals younger than a person (ego) are addressed by their personal names, while

older individuals are addressed using kinship terms.

Children in both ascending and descending generations are considered equivalent to one's siblings, and the children of siblings are equated with one's own children.

Generational unity is emphasized, meaning that great-grandfathers and grandfathers receive the same level of respect as fathers.

Within the same generation, distinctions are maintained between older and younger relatives.

The responsibilities and expected behaviors of three generations—grandparents, parents, and children—are clearly defined and regulated.

Some traditional Sanskrit-based kinship terms have been replaced by modern equivalents (e.g., *pitamaha* is now *pita*). Additionally, a respectful suffix is added to kinship terms for elders, such as *ji* (e.g., *chachaji*, *tauji*) in northern India, while in Bengal, the suffix *moshai* is used instead.

Marriage between close relatives is not allowed.

A newly married woman is expected to maintain a formal relationship with her parents-in-law. However, after becoming a mother, she gains social status and authority, leading to a relaxation of previous restrictions.

Families are structured so that multiple generations—children, parents, and grandparents—either live together or maintain strong social and kinship responsibilities toward each other.

Beyond the immediate joint family, individuals also have a broader network of kin, including paternal and maternal relatives, who provide support when needed.

II. Kinship Features in Central Zone

The key characteristics of kinship in Central India are:

1. Consanguinity is the primary factor that governs marriage decisions.
2. Kinship terminology reflects a strong sense of intimacy and closeness between relatives. Relations between kin are regulated by the custom of *neota-gifts*, where a cash gift is given equivalent to the cash received, and *neota-registers* are kept and preserved across generations.
3. Many castes are divided into exogamous clans, and in some cases, these clans are arranged in a hypergamous hierarchy.
4. Some castes, such as Marathas and Kunbis, practice bride-price, although the dowry system also exists within these groups.
5. In Gujarat, certain castes practice *mamera-type* cousin marriages (with the mother's brother) and levirate marriage (marriage to a deceased husband's brother).
6. The custom of periodic marriages in Gujarat has led to child marriages and unequal marriages, which are still practiced today.
7. In Maharashtra, the Maratha clan system resembles that of the Rajputs, with clans organized in a hierarchical structure. Clans are grouped into divisions based on the number of clans they include, such as *panch-kuli* and *sat-kuli*. Higher-ranked clans like the *panch-kuli* can marry within their group or take a bride from the *sat-kuli*, but they do not give their daughters to those outside the *panch-kuli*.
8. While kinship terms are mostly derived from northern traditions, some southern Dravidian terms are also used, such as *anna* and *nana* for brother, and *akka*, *tai*, and *mai* for sister.
9. Despite the patrilineal and patrilocal family structure in Maharashtra, in castes like Marathas, the wife frequently moves between her husband's and father's homes. Once she returns to her father's house, it becomes difficult for her to return to her husband's house.
10. The kinship system of tribals in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh differs from that of caste Hindus, with notable differences in kinship terminology, marriage rules, inheritance practices, and clan obligations.

III. Kinship Features in Southern Zone

The southern zone displays a complex kinship system. While the majority of castes and communities, such as the Namboodris, follow a patrilineal and patrilocal family structure, there are notable exceptions. Some groups, like the Nayars, have a matrilineal and matrilocal system. Additionally, certain castes, such as the Todas, exhibit a combination of both patrilineal and matrilineal elements.

There are distinct practices regarding polygyny and polyandry across different communities in India. Some groups, like the *Nayars*, traditionally practiced polyandry, while others, like the *Todas*, engaged in both polygyny and polyandry. However, the claim that the Asari (a caste primarily found in Kerala) exclusively practiced polygyny is inaccurate, as they are not historically known for such marital customs.

Furthermore, there have been polyandrous patrilineal groups, such as the Todas, and



polyandrous matrilineal groups, such as the Nayars. However, the statement that the Tiyan practiced polyandry is incorrect, as they traditionally followed a patrilineal system. Additionally, while there are no known polygynous matrilineal groups, matrilineal joint families do exist. The region features both patrilineal and matrilineal joint families. A prominent example of a matrilineal joint family is the Tarawad, which was historically prevalent among the Nayars of Malabar (in present-day Kerala) and certain other groups in the region.

Key characteristics of the *Tarawad* system include:

1. The property of the *Tarawad* is owned by both the males and females in the family.
2. Unmarried sons belong to their mother's *Tarawad*, while married sons are considered part of their wife's *Tarawad*.
3. The oldest male member of the family, called the *Karnavan* (his wife is called *Ammayi*), manages the *Tarawad* property.
4. The *Karnavan* holds absolute authority within the family. Upon his death, the next senior male member assumes the role. The *Karnavan* can make financial decisions, such as investing in his name, mortgaging property, lending money, and gifting land, without accountability to other family members.
5. If the *Tarawad* becomes too large, it is divided into *Tavazhis*, which consist of a female, her children, and all her descendants through the female line.

After the Madras Marumakkathayam Act of 1933, several changes occurred within the Tarawad system:

- Tarawad property could now be divided, allowing for individual ownership.
- The authority of the *Karnavan* (the senior male member of the Tarawad) was significantly reduced.
- Tarawad members became entitled to maintenance outside the ancestral home.
- Ancestor worship led by the *Karnavan* declined and was no longer commonly practiced.
- Marital relations became more personal, intimate, and individualized, moving away from traditional practices.
- Upon a member's death, their self-acquired property now passed to their widow and children; in their absence, inheritance went to the mother and then the maternal uncle (not the maternal grandmother, as traditionally, inheritance followed the matrilineal line through male relatives).

a. Clan Organization and Marriage

Rules in the South

A caste is divided into five exogamous clans, each with its own distinct characteristics:

1. Each clan is named after an animal, plant, or some other object.
2. A person from one clan may marry someone from another clan, but not their own. However, this choice is influenced by the rule of exchanging daughters.
3. Marriages involve not only clan exogamy but also the exchange of daughters between families.
4. Due to the daughter exchange marriage rule, many kinship terms overlap. For

example, the term used for “nanad” (husband’s sister) is the same as for “bhabhi” (brother’s wife), the term for “sala” (wife’s brother) is also used for “bahnoi” (sister’s husband), and the term for “sasur” (father-in-law) is used for the father of the brother’s wife.

5. Marriage between the children of two sisters is prohibited.
6. Marrying a wife’s younger sister is allowed, and two sisters may marry two brothers in the same family.
7. In the South, there is a system of preferential mating. Preference is given first to the daughter of the elder sister, second to the daughter of the father’s sister, and third to the daughter of the mother’s brother. However, cross-cousin marriages, especially uncle-niece unions, have become rare today.
8. Marriage taboos include restrictions such as a man not marrying his younger sister’s daughter, a widow not marrying her husband’s elder or younger brother, and a man not marrying his mother’s sister’s daughter.
9. Marriages often depend on age differences, with some unions, like that of a grandfather and granddaughter, being permissible in the South.
10. Marriages are not aimed at expanding the kin group but at strengthening existing bonds, reinforcing close kin relationships.
11. A girl must marry someone from a group older than hers (tam-mum), and she can also marry her older cross-cousins from a younger group. A boy must marry someone from a

“tam-pin” group and a child from a “tam-mum” group.

12. In the South, after marriage, a girl does not leave her father’s house to enter a stranger’s home. Her husband is considered part of her maternal family, and her marriage does not signify separation from her father’s house. She has the freedom to move within her father-in-law’s home.

b. Comparison of Kinship System of North and South India

- In the South, kinship is organized based on age categories, distinguishing between those older than Ego (tam-mum) and those younger than Ego (tam-pin). (tam is self, Mum is 'before' and pin is 'after')
- In the South, there are no specific behavior norms for married women, while in the North, women face many restrictions.
- In the North, marriage is intended to expand the kinship group, whereas in the South, it strengthens pre-existing kin ties.
- Marriage in the South does not signify a woman’s separation from her father’s home, but in the North, a woman is considered a visitor to her parent’s family after marriage.
- In the South, Ego has kin who are both blood relatives and affinal kin, whereas in other contexts, these roles are separate.
- In a Southern family, there is no clear division between the birth family and the marital family, unlike in the North, where these two families are distinct. In the South, members of Ego’s birth family can also become part of his marital family.



- In the South, kinship organization is based on age differences, whereas in the North, it is based on generational divisions.
- In the North, kinship terms clearly distinguish between blood relations and affinal kin, but in the South, these distinctions are less clear.

IV. Kinship Features in Eastern Zone

In eastern India, which includes parts of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, and Orissa, there are more tribes than caste Hindus. Notable tribes include the Khasi, Birhor, Ho, Munda, and Uraon. The kinship systems in this region do not follow a single pattern. People who speak Mundan languages tend to have patrilineal and patrilocal family structures, though joint families are uncommon here. Cross-cousin marriages are rare, but bride-price is a common practice. Women are referred to as “dual” (you two). Kinship terms are influenced by both Sanskrit and Dravidian languages. The Khasis and Garos, in contrast, follow a matrilineal joint family system. After marriage, a man typically does not live with his parents and instead establishes a separate household.

Kinship organization in India is shaped by caste and language. In today’s competitive society, a person must rely on their kin as allies for social status and livelihood. While caste and linguistic groups may provide occasional support, the most reliable and loyal supporters are often close kin. Therefore, individuals must strengthen their ties with family and expand their kinship networks. Marriage practices such as cousin marriages, preferential mating, and exchange rules are evolving, extending kinship ties through marriage. These extended kin relationships can play a crucial role in helping individuals gain power and improve their status.

The kinship system in India varies across different regions, influenced by socio-cultural factors such as caste, language, and geography. In the Northern Zone, kinship practices exhibit a general pattern, where distinctions between older and younger relatives are emphasized, marriage among close kin is prohibited, and joint family structures ensure strong intergenerational ties. Respectful kinship terms are commonly used, and women experience a shift in social status after becoming mothers. The Central Zone shows a strong focus on consanguinity in marriage decisions, with the practice of neota-gifts reinforcing kinship bonds. Exogamous clans and hypergamous hierarchies exist in some castes, while marriage customs vary, including bride-price, cousin marriages, and levirate unions. Maharashtra’s Maratha clan system follows a strict hierarchical structure, and kinship terms reflect a blend of northern and southern influences. The kinship patterns of tribal groups in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh differ from those of caste Hindus, particularly in marriage rules and inheritance practices.

In the Southern Zone, kinship structures are more diverse, with both patrilineal and matrilineal systems coexisting. Some communities, like the Nayars, follow a matrilineal tradition, whereas others, like the Namboodris, adhere to a patrilineal structure. Practices such as polygyny, polyandry, and preferential mating reflect the region’s complex kinship traditions. The Tarawad system, once dominant among the Nayars, emphasized collective property ownership and senior male authority but changed significantly after legal reforms. Marriage rules in the South emphasize kinship reinforcement rather than expansion, contrasting with Northern practices. In the Eastern Zone, tribal groups display distinct kinship patterns, with the Khasis and Garos following a matrilineal system, while other communities maintain

patrilineal traditions. Across India, kinship remains a key factor in social organization, providing individuals with social and economic support, especially in competitive

environments where family alliances are essential for maintaining status and power.

Recap

- ◆ Families in India can be categorised into two main types
- ◆ A nuclear family is typically defined as a household comprising a man, his wife, and their unmarried children
- ◆ A joint family consists of a nuclear family along with extended kin from either the husband's or wife's side, all living together in one household
- ◆ Coresidentiality (living under the same roof)
- ◆ Commensality (sharing meals or a common kitchen)
- ◆ Coparcenary (joint ownership of property)
- ◆ Generation depth (spanning three or more generations)
- ◆ Industrialization and urbanization have brought significant social changes
- ◆ Laws such as the Civil Marriage Act of 1872, the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, and the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 have weakened the dominance of the joint family structure.
- ◆ In folk societies, rules of endogamy and exogamy are formally prescribed and are a part of the traditional culture
- ◆ The universal form of marriage is monogamy
- ◆ Divorce is a socially sanctioned dissolving of the marriage between living partners.
- ◆ In traditional societies like India, mate selection was solely the responsibility of parents and elders
- ◆ Inter-caste marriage refers to the union of a husband and wife from different castes.
- ◆ Hypergamy or Anuloma: These types of marriages take place between men of higher caste (Varna) and women of lower caste (Varna)
- ◆ Hypogamy or Pratiloma: These types of marriages take place between men of lower caste (Varna) and women of higher caste (Varna).
- ◆ Inter-religion marriage, also known as inter-faith marriage, is traditionally referred to as a “mixed marriage.”
- ◆ A live-in relationship is an arrangement in which an unmarried couple resides together for an extended period, similar to a marriage, but without formal legal recognition

- ◆ Kinship is a system of social relationships based on both marital (affinal) and blood (consanguinal) ties
- ◆ Kin relationships serve as a means of transferring status and property from one generation to the next, while also forming effective social groups for cooperation and conflict
- ◆ In eastern India, which includes parts of Bengal, Bihar, Assam, and Orissa, there are more tribes than caste Hindus
- ◆ Kinship terms are influenced by both Sanskrit and Dravidian languages.
- ◆ Kinship organization in India is shaped by caste and language

Objective Questions

1. What are the two categories of family system?
2. What is the second name of joint family?
3. In which year the Civil Marriages Act was enacted?
4. In which year Hindu Succession Act was passed?
5. In which country Todas tribal people are located?
6. Which act prohibited both polygamous marriages in India?
7. What is Hypergamy?
8. What is Hypogamy?
9. What is Mixed Marriage?
10. Which section of IPC criminalise consensual sexual relations between individuals of the same sex?

Answers

1. Nuclear family and joint family
2. Extended family
3. 1872
4. 1956
5. India

6. The Hindu Marriage Act
7. Types of marriages take place between men of higher caste (Varna) and women of lower caste (Varna)
8. Types of marriages take place between men of lower caste (Varna) and women of higher caste (Varna)
9. Inter-religious marriage
10. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code

Assignments

1. Explain major functions of family as a social institution
2. Define family and discuss various typologies
3. Discuss the joint family system and its functions and decline in the contemporary society
4. What is kinship? Examine its various regional differences in Indian society
5. What is the anthropological approach used to study kinship systems and discuss its perspectives?

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UNIT

Tribal Social Institutions and their Dynamic Nature

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ familiarise themselves with the tribal life and their major social institutions
- ◆ explain the customs, ritual and practices associated with the tribal community
- ◆ assess the dynamic nature of tribal society and means of social transformation

Prerequisites

Have you noticed the term ‘ST’ commonly seen in public employment notifications or in relation to educational institutions? ‘ST’ stands for Scheduled Tribe, referring to indigenous communities, often called Adivasis, who have historically lived in forests, hilly regions, or other isolated areas. It is important to recognize that these communities have distinct social customs, practices, and rituals, which may differ significantly from those of the mainstream population. However, describing them as “entirely odd” is inaccurate and inappropriate. Their educational, economic, and religious life has traditionally been shaped by their unique environments and cultural heritage, and while it may differ from that of the broader society, it should not be seen as incomparable or inferior.

Tribal social institutions are an integral part of the cultural fabric of indigenous communities, shaping their social structure, norms, and practices. These institutions, which vary widely across different tribal groups, encompass family systems, governance, rituals, and economic practices that guide the daily lives and interactions of tribal members. Unlike mainstream societies, tribal social institutions are often

deeply rooted in traditions, customs, and a close connection to nature, reflecting a way of life that has been passed down through generations. These institutions are not merely organizational structures but are also vital to maintaining the cultural identity and solidarity of the tribe, providing a sense of belonging and purpose to its members.

Over time, however, tribal social institutions have faced significant challenges due to external forces such as colonialism, modernisation, and urbanisation. As tribal communities interact more with the outside world, these institutions are adapting, and sometimes undergoing transformation, to maintain their relevance in a changing social and economic landscape. This unit explores the various facets of tribal social institutions, focusing on how they function, their role in maintaining social order, and the impact of contemporary changes on these traditional structures. Through a deeper understanding of tribal social institutions, we can gain insights into the resilience and adaptability of indigenous communities while also appreciating the diversity of social systems across cultures.

Keywords

Tribes, Primitive law, Tribal economy, Tribal polity, Animism, Magic

Discussion

2.2.1 Tribal Social Organisation

Social organisation serves as the foundation of any society and differs from social structure. While social structure refers to the institutionally defined and regulated relationships within a society, social organisation pertains to the arrangement of activities and interactions among individuals. For instance, in Indian society, the varna and caste system represent its structure, whereas social organization focuses on how these institutions function in everyday life, including aspects like purity and pollution, food-sharing customs, marriage networks, and social hierarchy. Social organisation is shaped by human actions, where individuals consider the behaviors of others, forming established patterns over time. Since human behavior

is constantly evolving, social organisation remains a dynamic process. Ultimately, it ensures the smooth operation of various social institutions, contributing to the overall stability and progress of society.

R.H. Lowie defined organization as the coordination of different components that perform specific functions, serving as a collective mechanism for achieving a shared goal. In tribal societies, social organisation is deeply rooted in a strong sense of community. Economic activities such as gathering fruits, hunting animals, animal husbandry, and fishing highlight the communal nature of tribal life. Additionally, tribal societies are structured around clan groups or sibs, which play a crucial role in their organisation. These clans, based on lineage, follow

exogamous practices, meaning members marry outside their group, and they are unilateral in nature, tracing descent through a single lineage.

Radcliffe-Brown described social organisation as a system in which institutions operate according to recognised objectives. Social control, maintained through folkways, mores, laws, and institutional consensus, emerges naturally and is essential for the stability of society. In both tribal and broader societies, major social institutions are interconnected and mutually supportive. These institutions, including the economy, political organisation, legal systems, social control mechanisms, gender relations, and religious practices, function together in a symbolic and cohesive manner to sustain social order.

2.2.2 Tribal Political Organisation

The terms polity, policy, and politics originate from the Greek word *polis*, which refers to a political community. The concept of *polity* encompasses a defined territorial space, organisational structure, leadership, legal or customary systems, and the interrelationships among these elements.

Political organisation refers to a public institution responsible for formulating policies that maintain social harmony and order. R.H. Lowie, considered the pioneer of modern political anthropology, analysed political institutions to understand broader social issues. In *African Political Systems*, edited by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, the political structures of tribal societies were explored in depth. Radcliffe-Brown, in his study of the Trobriand Islanders, emphasised that politics revolves around maintaining order, the legitimate use of force, and territorial rights. He regarded political organisation as an integral part of social organisation, highlighting the authority structure as a key aspect of political life. Tribal political

systems are categorised into centralised political organizations, such as chiefdoms and states, and decentralised ones, including villages, clans, lineages, fraternities, clubs, age-grade systems, secret societies, and the Melanesian Big Man system. These political bodies create laws, formulate policies, and ensure governance in accordance with the cultural values of their societies. Political organizations in tribal societies serve multiple functions, including:

- Establishing norms to regulate daily life within the community.
- Enforcing order through the use of authority to maintain peace and harmony in the village.
- Resolving disputes both within the village and with external groups.
- Making decisions related to agricultural activities and farming practices.
- Providing security and safeguarding the village from external threats.
- Coordinating communal activities such as hunting, religious ceremonies, and festivals.

2.2.2.1 Law and Social Control in Tribal Society

Primitive societies follow an organised system of customs that are reinforced through sanctions. Malinowski argued that the primary function of law is to regulate natural tendencies, restrain human instincts, and enforce compulsory, non-spontaneous behavior. In such societies, customary rules dictate human conduct. A strong sense of mutual dependence and obligation compels individuals to adhere to unwritten traditions and social norms. Law, therefore, is seen as a set of principles that regulate human activities within a community. It grants authorities

In primitive societies, the development of law is a gradual and organic process, where customs and practices gain legitimacy over time through enforcement and acceptance. Radcliffe-Brown stated that law serves as a mechanism for social control by systematically applying force. He argued that all societies undergo similar processes to safeguard individuals, spouses, and property from harm. The establishment of formal regulations within society emerged alongside the formation of the state.

Characteristics

The Kamar tribal community of Madhya Pradesh relies entirely on customary practices for resolving disputes, with traditional village panchayat leaders overseeing the process. Punishments vary based on the nature and severity of the offense. Many transgressions in Kamar society are regarded as sins that can be atoned for by offering a community feast to village leaders and the families involved.

2.2.3 Tribal Economic Organisation

Tribal economies represent the earliest form of human economic systems, encompassing food gathering, hunting, fishing, pastoralism, and agriculture. These economies are primarily focused on subsistence and are closely tied to nature. The food-gathering economy has existed since the Paleolithic period, with hunting and

fishing communities eventually transitioning to more settled lifestyles. Compared to food gathering, these economies support larger, self-sustaining local groups, with an abundance of food and protein-based trade. Examples of food-gathering communities include the Mankiridia and Kharias of Odisha, as well as the Munda and Birhor tribes from central and eastern states like Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and West Bengal.

The pastoral economy often coexisted with hunting and fishing practices. Over time, some communities shifted to a pastoral way of life. Pastoral communities in India include the Koyas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, as well as various tribes in the Himalayan regions such as the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan, the Jath of Gujarat's Kutch region, the Kuruba of Karnataka, and the Kinnauras of Himachal Pradesh. Nomadic pastoralism is still practiced by tribes like the Dhangars of Maharashtra, Golla herders of Karnataka, and Raikwars of Rajasthan.

Methods of the pastoral form of economy are: semi-nomadism or sedentary lifestyle, small population, moderate economic resources with respect to technology, division of labour and land ownership, surplus of food and trade and commerce.

The horticultural economy is a more advanced form of tribal economy, where women play a significant role at various stages, contributing to the overall stability of the society. Key tribal communities involved in horticulture include the Madia Gond, Aangmi Naga, A bor (Adi), Dargaria Kandhs, and Kaani tribes of the Western Ghats. This type of economy is marked by a sedentary lifestyle, with low to moderate population sizes and economic resources that range from simple to moderate, in terms of technology and division of labor. It typically

offers small to moderate food availability and is supported by strong social leadership within the community.

Agricultural economy is a stable and permanent form of economic system. It includes the domestication of animals, plantation, water and technology use, as well as land development. Several major tribal communities in India that have adopted agriculture as their primary mode of livelihood include the Baiga, Bhil, Bhuiyan, Ho, Lepcha, Oraon, and Santhal.

Agricultural economy has evolved through various stages such as shifting cultivation, highland cultivation, plain land cultivation, irrigation-based cultivation, and intensive cultivation. This economy is characterized by a sedentary lifestyle, high population density, permanent settlement patterns, and advanced economic resources in terms of technology, division of labor, and land ownership. The development of social organization in different economies has varied, becoming more specialized, organized, structured, and permanent over time. Malinowski studied the Kula system among the Trobriand Islanders, which is a form of ceremonial, utilitarian, and gift exchange system within their social structure.

2.2.3.1 Characteristics of Tribal Economy

Tribal economy operates on a small scale in terms of area, production, cropping patterns, and technology. It is characterized by:

- Production primarily for self-consumption
- A reliance on barter systems
- Absence of regular marketing and profit-driven motives

- Community-specific resource ownership rather than individual ownership
- Relatively underdeveloped in several aspects.

2.2.4 Kinship and Gender in Tribal Society

The concepts of 'sex' and 'gender' are shaped by both biological and sociocultural factors. The social roles and behaviors of males and females have varied across human societies. Research on tribal societies suggests that men traditionally assume roles as warriors, hunters, and processors of raw materials for tools and weapons, while women are responsible for cooking and food preparation. As a result, men have historically had greater access to and control over valuable resources in their societies. There have been matriarchal societies in human history, with anthropological evidence supporting these claims. Some anthropologists argue that egalitarian hunting-gathering societies existed before colonialism, where women held a higher status due to their roles in economic production and distribution. Over time, more complex social structures led to increased gender-based stratification. The Khasis and the Garos of Assam are examples of matrilineal societies, where succession is determined through the mother's side.

Anthropological studies reveal significant cross-cultural differences in the behaviors of females and males. For instance, the division of labor by sex is influenced by both biological and societal factors. In foraging societies, women typically contribute more than half of the food required for subsistence. In many horticultural societies, the labor force is largely composed of women. In agrarian societies, women have a key role in production. In tribal societies, the household functions as both a unit of production and

consumption, which helps reduce the disparities between the sexes.

Kinship ties in Indian society are very strong, providing a social safety net that ensures women do not feel insecure even during times of hardship. Anthropologists have two contrasting views on gender relations in tribal societies: one asserts that gender relations are unequal and women face significant hardships, while the other suggests that primitive societies typically assign women a high status. Malinowski argued that understanding gender relations requires considering the mutual responsibilities between the sexes and the protections in place for each. R.H. Lowie identified four key factors to understand gender relations and the status of tribal women: the treatment of women, their legal status, their opportunities for social participation, and the extent of their work.

Among the Andaman Islanders, both men and women equally contribute to religious and economic life, while the Kadars exhibit a clear division of labor that offers women ample opportunity. The distribution of work between men and women is crucial to understanding gender relations. In the Khasi society, which is matrilineal, inheritance follows the mother's line, with property passing from mother to daughter, and religious activities are traditionally women's domain. Similarly, the Garos, a matrilineal and matrilineal society, inherit property through the female line, reflecting the dominant role of women over men in their tribal structure.

In many tribal societies, taboos exist to prevent negative effects on gender relations. For instance, women are often deemed unfit to participate in certain sociocultural and religious activities due to perceived "impurity" linked to menstruation and childbirth.

The status of tribal women varies across communities. For example, according to Grigson, Gond women enjoy greater autonomy in areas such as choosing a husband and seeking divorce, though in other areas their status is lower. Tharu women, skilled in sorcery and witchcraft, hold a special status within their communities. In Khasi society, where polyandry is practiced, women experience ongoing physical, emotional, and social strain. While Sema Naga women have a relatively better social standing in terms of gender relations compared to Angami and Ao Naga women, the latter enjoy more security through property ownership and marital ties. Overall, tribal societies tend to grant women a higher social status, although their gender relations are often linked to their roles in childbearing and child-rearing. A mother is generally respected, but a woman is often culturally and socially looked down upon.

2.2.5 Tribal Religion

In 1871, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as “the belief in spiritual beings.” He proposed that the foundation of religion lies in animism, or the belief in souls and nature worship, commonly seen in primitive societies. Tylor suggested that polytheism typically appears in semi-urbanized societies, while monotheism is characteristic of urban and more developed societies. In 1915, French sociologist Émile Durkheim defined religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into a single moral community.” Clifford Geertz, on the other hand, defined religion as a system of symbols that creates powerful, lasting moods and motivations. He highlighted the significance of symbols and how they make religious beliefs convincing to individuals.

Émile Durkheim, who studied small groups of Australian Aborigines, introduced the concept of totemism. He argued that religion originated from totemism, where

totems—representations of animals, plants, or geographical features—act as symbols of both gods and society. These totems are considered ancestors or emblems of a community and are worshipped by them. V. Elwin, in his anthropological work, explored the relationship between tribal religion and Hinduism. According to G.S. Ghurye, tribal groups are seen as “backward Hindus.” Tribes such as the Munda, Ho, and others in the Chotanagpur region believe in “Mana,” regarded as the origin of religion. Over time, some tribal communities that interacted with Hindus incorporated certain Hindu religious practices, a process referred to as Hinduisation.

Tribal religion is centered around the belief in Mana, considered a supernatural force. Majumdar and Madan suggested that the entire religious life of primitive societies is grounded in the belief in supernatural powers that permeate the universe. For instance, the Ho and Mundas refer to this power as Bonga, an unseen spirit responsible for natural occurrences such as rain, cold, floods, and epidemics. Tribes also believe in animism or animatism, which asserts that powerful souls survive beyond death. Moreover, tribal people worship nature, a practice known as naturalism. The Garos of Assam, for example, worship the sun and moon, while the Mundas revere the sun god and believe in the immortality of the soul, reincarnation, and the power of magic. Totems, representing various animals and objects, are viewed as the originators of the tribe and are believed to have supernatural connections that protect the community. Families associated with a particular totem observe strict exogamy.

Religion is a universal concept that endorses belief in supernatural forces, explains life, death, and evil, and sets moral codes that define what is sacred within a society. Tribal religions consist of several belief types, including animistic,



animalistic, naturist, totemic, and theistic beliefs. Taboo, meaning to forbid certain actions or behaviors, functions as a societal law meant to regulate individuals' adherence to social norms. Certain objects, often in the form of animals or plants, are regarded as ancestors and are venerated as totems, with taboos attached to them. Rituals, which are closely linked to these beliefs, are structured acts designed to communicate with and control supernatural forces through prayers, offerings, sacrifices, and the manipulation of objects. Religious practitioners in tribal societies, such as priests and shamans, play distinct roles. Priests are ceremonials who conduct rituals, sacrifices, and interpret divine will, using prayers and offerings to appease supernatural powers. Shamans, either male or female, serve as intermediaries between supernatural forces and individuals, using divination to diagnose ailments and magic for healing, often functioning as medicine men within their communities.

The institution of youth dormitories in tribal societies plays a significant role and is observed in various tribal communities. Among the Nagas, it is referred to as 'Morung,' while the female youth organization is known as 'Yo.' Among the Angami Nagas, it is called 'Rangbag.' In Madhya Bharat, the Mundas and Hos refer to it as 'Gitiora.' The Oraon people call it 'Dhumkurya,' while the Bhuiyans call it 'Dhangiribasa.' The Muria Gonds refer to it as 'Gotul.'

2.2.5.1 Animism

The word 'Animism' was Tylor's coinage for his theory of origin of religion, which is very similar to that of Spencer-though the word 'anima' implies, according to him, the idea of 'soul' rather than of 'ghost'. However, in anthropological literature, there exists some ambiguity about the term 'animism', as it is sometime employed in the sense of the belief of the primitive peoples that not only creatures but also inanimate objects have life

and personality and they have souls. Tylor's theory coheres both the senses.

According to Tylor, primitive man's reflections on such experiences as death, disease trances and visions and above all dreams, led him to conclude that all there are to be counted for by the presence or absence of some immaterial entity the 'soul'. In a way, both, Spencer's Ghost theory and Tylor's theory might be regarded as two versions of dream theory of the origin of religion. Later on, according to Tylor, primitive man transferred this idea of soul being detachable from whatever it is lodged in, it could be thought of as independent. This thought gave rise to the idea of spiritual beings, whose supposed existence constituted Tylor's minimum definition of religion and these finally developed into Gods, being vastly superior to man controlling his destiny. Both the ideas are present among the lowest savagers who, in evolutionary perspective, were held to be nearest to the prehistoric man. Also, it remains to be proved that the most primitive peoples think that creatures and material objects have souls like their own. Thus, if in Tylor's sense of the word, if any people can be said to be dominantly animistic, they belong to much advanced cultures, a fact which will be highly damaging to the evolutionary argument.

2.2.5.2 Animatism, Manaism and Bongaism

Tylor's earliest critics said that animism is a later development in the history of religion. They postulated a pre-animistic stage when religious belief supposedly consisted mainly in the belief that everything has life and is animate. Prominent among these writers were Preuss and Max Muller. More recently, Marett evolved a special form of animatism theory which is called Manaism. Marett said that the entire religious life of the primitive is born out of their belief in a

certain understandable, impersonal, non-material and unindividualized supernatural power which takes its abode in all the objects, animate and inanimate, that exist in the world. Though beyond the reach of the sense', it exists in all objects, including human beings, and expresses itself as physical force or such other power.

Amongst the Hos of Singhbhum district of Bihar, there exists a similar kind of religious belief, which Majumdar has called Bongaism. These people believe in the concept of Bonga', which resides in trees, natural objects and sometimes in man-made articles like bicycles also. It is the manifestation of a vague supernatural power which is according to the believers, the cause of all energy.

Due to contacts with non-tribal peoples, many a tribal group has changed its religious life. Such contacts have in certain cases given a fresh lease of life to a tribal group by providing it with better tools of adaptation. Roy has spoken of the advantages that have accrued to the tribal people of Chota Nagpur and adjacent areas as a result of contact with Hinduism and Christianity. But it is also true that such contacts have in numerous cases led to tribal disorganisation. Mills has pointed out the strains to which Nagas converted to Christianity are subjected. Elvin has drawn attention to a loss of nerve which seems to have overtaken some middle Indian tribes.

2.2.5.3 Magic, Religion and Science

Malinowski gave the functional analysis of magic, religion and science.

The function of magic, according to Malinowski, is to supply primitive people with a practical way out of difficulties faced by them in day-to-day pursuits for survival. It provides them with the ability to carry on with life despite inevitable problems. Malinowski argues that "the function of

magic is to ritualise man's optimism, to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear."

The function of religion says Malinowski, is to establish mental attitudes, respect for tradition, adjustment with nature, courage and confidence in struggle for survival and in the event of death.

The function of primitive knowledge (science) is to familiarise tribals with their surroundings and enable them to use natural resources. It sets them apart from all living species in the world.

Both magic and religion are tools of adaptation, the objective being to help man out of difficult situations, and relieve his tensions. Both approaches seem to have always existed together; sometimes, they come so close to each other as to almost blend into each other. However, it is believed that the magical approach is more primitive. Man must have resorted to supplication only after his ego-driven magical approach failed to produce results invariably.

1. Magic

Magic can be defined as the attempt to activate supernatural or spiritual agencies in order to attain a specific outcome by ritualised means. Magic is not always readily distinguishable from religious activity and, in operation, is often associated with it. However, an activity is usually identified as magic by its more instrumental, often more immediate, concern with the achievement of specific ends.

Frazer is probably one of the best-known writers on magic. His book, *The Golden Bough*, is mainly concerned with the problem of magic and its relation to science and religion. For Frazer, the efforts to control nature for day-to-day survival led early man to resort to magical practices. Frazer found that magical formulae are based on



two principles: (i) like produces like, and (ii) once in contact, always in contact. He reduced these principles into two laws.

a. Law of Similarity

The magic associated with it are homoeopathic imitative mimetic magic. In Chota Nagpur, some tribal groups believe that thunder with trumbling noise is the direct cause of rain. Therefore, when they want rain, they go to a hill top, sacrifice a hen or a pig, and then start flinging stones, rocks down the hill, expecting rain to follow the rumbling noises created by their action, just as it follows thunder.

The Ho light fires expecting rain to come out of the cloud of smoke that is raised to the skies. Human sacrifice is made by the Khond-believing that as tears roll down from the sufferer's eyes, and blood gushes forth from his wounds, so will rain come. These are cases of homoeopathic magic.

b. Law of Contact

The magic associated with it is known as contagious magic. Primitives have been found "unwilling to use each other's clothing, not for reasons for hygiene, but because clothes are regarded a part of that person's body who wore them first. The main implication of the law of contact is that a part is always associated with the whole to which it belongs or belonged; once a part, always a part. This association is extended to clothing, nail and hair trimmings, utensils, and so on.

On these two principles are based all the various magical rites found in primitive societies. All types of magic are labelled 'sympathetic' by Frazer, because he considers them to be based on the principle of sympathy between cause and effect. Magic, like modern science, is based on the observation of, and experimentation on, cause-effect phenomena.

2. Magic and Religion

Magic and religion are very close to each other in their role as tools of adaptation when, common skills and capabilities are of no avail. Malinowski has shown that while making boats and canoes, the Trobriand islanders are perfect technicians and have a sound body of scientific knowledge. But the amount of science they know, is not enough to enable them to cope with the problem of why a storm comes at a particular moment and why particular canoes are sunk. So magic and religion step in as post scientific techniques. Magic and religion are both imbued with the mystery of the world. However, there are fundamental differences in practising magic and religion.

Similarities:

- i. Both magic and religion belong to the area of the sacred and are imbued with the mystery of the world.
- ii. Both phenomena provide an escape from emotional stress which cannot be wished away on the basis of the primitive people's range of rational knowledge.
- iii. Mythological traditions closely surround both magic and religion. Taboos and practices associated with the two areas separate them from the domain of the profane.
- iv. The technique of both magic as well as religion is ritualistic. The entire performance is governed by a traditional order which must be strictly followed, or the efficacy of the rite is lost.

Differences:

- i. Magical acts are a means to an end, religious acts are self-contained acts, performed in self-fulfilment.

- ii. Religion is worship'-submission of the individual to the supernatural powers, while magic is an attempt to 'control' them.
- iii. Usually magic is individualistic phenomena, while religion is collective.
- iv. Magical art is handed down, from generation to generation, mostly in direct filiation (from father to son), thus it is confined to the specialist. In religion everyone takes an active part.
- v. In magic, there exist both positive and negative types; not so in religion.
- vi. Magic (black magic) is a matter of fear, and people are usually afraid of magicians, while priests hold a high status in society.

Finally, it can be said that, religion and magic are two ways of tiding over crises. Primitive man faced the realities of life with his belief in some superior power, or powers, either by trying to coerce it into service, i.e. by magic, or by praying and offering worship to it i.e. by the religious approach. Both magic and religion are tools of adaptation, the objective being to help man out of difficult situations and relieve his tensions.

3. Magic and Science

Both Science and magic depend upon mechanistic procedures. The magician must follow the same type of process as is done by the scientists. But whereas the latter deals with the natural world, the former deals with the supernatural. The failures of science are due to inadequate knowledge and can be corrected by further research. The failures of magic are supposed to be due to some error in the performance of the ritual, or else due to counter magic by more powerful magicians.

Similarities

- i. Like science, magic has a specific aim related to human needs and instincts. Both are governed by a system of rules which determine how a certain act can be effectively performed.
- ii. Both are man's effort to control nature.
- iii. Both develop techniques of carrying out certain activities.

Differences

- i. (i) 'Science' is related with the general experience of everyday life; magic on the other hand, is founded in particular experiences of tense emotional states.
- ii. (ii) The basis of science is the conviction in validity of experience, effort and reason. Magic is based on the belief that one can still hope, one can still desire.
- iii. The corpus of rational knowledge is incorporated in a social setting and certain types of activities which are clearly separable from the social setting and activities related to the magical knowledge.

On the basis of these differences Malinowski concludes that science belongs to the domain of the profane while magic comprises half of the domain of the sacred. Magic unlike science, is based on fallacious assumptions. The example given by Tylor is the superstition of the modern Greek peasant that gold will cure jaundice. The Greek peasant, classified jaundice with gold because of their common colour (yellow). Tylor regards as an example of 'pseudo-science'.

Both magic and science assume the existence of non-variant relations and the operation of impersonal causes in a more or less mechanical fashion. In magic there

is an assumed uniformity of cause and effect as postulated in natural laws. Frazer says that the two are essentially the same, the difference being that magic is based on wrong assumptions regarding causal relations. That is why he calls magic the bastard sister science.

2.2.6 Dynamic Nature of Tribal Life

No society is inherently static; every society is in a constant state of change. The continuous evolution of the nature, structure, and relationships of groups and institutions is known as social change. The extent of this dynamism depends on the types of interventions and exposures that a society experiences. Social change is a process, not a final product. An institution, however, is the result of that process and endures through it. A social structure cannot be preserved as a fixed entity, as social change is first reflected in shifts in social relationships, followed by changes in structure. Culture, as a process, undergoes continuous change in a structured way. While social change may experience fluctuations, moving both forward and backward, it always progresses in a specific direction. These cultural or social changes can either sustain or transform culture by modifying, removing, or replacing elements. Several cultural processes have contributed to changes in tribal social organization, including:

- Sanskritisation
- Modernisation
- Urbanisation
- Industrialisation
- Globalisation

Renowned American anthropologist Robert Redfield, in his book *Peasant Society and Culture*, introduced the concepts of

Great Tradition and Little Tradition while studying Mexican communities. Milton Singer and McKim Marriott later applied these concepts to the Indian context to explore social change. They observed that the Chhau dance, originally practiced by the Santhals and Mundas of Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand, had been adopted by higher caste groups with modifications, which modernized the traditional dance form. M.N. Srinivas, in his book *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, described the changes seen in both castes and tribal societies in India, driven by various cultural change processes such as Sanskritization, Westernization, and secularization.

Through the process of Sanskritization, the Suddha Saoras of Odisha have abandoned the consumption of liquor and beef, and instead, they now worship the Tulsi tree and Goddess Laxmi. The influence of Westernization in Indian society has led to the introduction of humanitarianism, institutional reforms, scientific advancements, educational institutions, and a new political culture, all of which have also impacted tribal societies. As a result of these changes, tribal people are now more educated, better equipped for employment, and more likely to use modern technological tools, while also claiming individual rights. These shifts have significantly altered their belief systems, institutional structures, and social dynamics.

Similarly, modernization in India has brought changes to indigenous cultures. The introduction of communication technologies like television, radio, and computers has gradually infused these communities with a more scientific worldview. The use of modern conveniences, such as refrigerators and automobiles, has become widespread across different ethnic groups. The effects of modern values can be observed among tribal communities like the Santhal, Munda, Ho, and Gond, particularly in areas around mining

and industrial complexes in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and other tribal regions.

At the macro level, the impact of modernization is evident in their adoption of new technologies, changes in their economy, political organization, social structures, and legal systems. On the micro level, the influence of modernization is noticeable in both their material and non-material cultures, including changes in dress, food, rituals, technology, and methods of disease treatment. In central and northeastern India, tribal communities have experienced changes in various aspects of their lives, including education levels, age at marriage, number of children per family, equal pay for men and women performing the same tasks, a shift towards individual family identity over community-based ethnicity, the adoption of family planning, and the use of allopathic medicine.

The provisions in the Indian Constitution concerning social, economic, and political sectors have had a positive influence on tribal life and their social organization. Globalization, as a social change process, has had a significant impact on tribal communities. Since 1991, with the adoption of the Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG) model, changes have been observed in government policies, capital flows, technology adoption, and the incorporation of new ideas and cultural elements. These processes have affected tribal social structures in various aspects of their lives. However, the effects of these changes are not uniform, as not all tribal communities are equally open to them. Consequently, some tribal communities, like the Meena, Santhal, Munda, Gond, and Oraons, are more developed, while others, such as the Abuj Maria, Boda, Didayi, and Andaman Islanders, remain more backward.

Recap

- ◆ Social organization serves as the foundation of any society and differs from social structure.
- ◆ Radcliffe-Brown described social organization as a system in which institutions operate according to recognized objectives.
- ◆ The terms polity, policy, and politics originate from the Greek word *polis*, which refers to a political community.
- ◆ Political organization refers to a public institution responsible for formulating policies that maintain social harmony and order.
- ◆ Radcliffe-Brown stated that law serves as a mechanism for social control by systematically applying force.
- ◆ Primitive law is reinforced by kinship ties.
- ◆ The economic organization of a society encompasses all human activities related to the production, distribution, and consumption of goods to sustain its population.



- ◆ The pastoral economy often coexisted with hunting and fishing practices.
- ◆ The horticultural economy is a more advanced form of tribal economy, where women play a significant role at various stages, contributing to the overall stability of the society.
- ◆ Agricultural economy is a stable and permanent form of economic system.
- ◆ In 1871, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor defined religion as “the belief in spiritual beings.”
- ◆ Émile Durkheim, who studied small groups of Australian Aborigines, introduced the concept of totemism.
- ◆ Tribal religion is centered around the belief in Mana, considered a supernatural force.
- ◆ The word ‘Animism’ was Tylor’s coinage for his theory of origin of religion, which is very similar to that of Spencer though the word ‘anima’ implies, according to him, the idea of ‘soul’ rather than of ‘ghost’.
- ◆ Magic can be defined as the attempt to activate supernatural or spiritual agencies in order to attain a specific outcome by ritualised means.
- ◆ Both Science and magic depend upon mechanistic procedures.
- ◆ The influence of Westernization in Indian society has led to the introduction of humanitarianism, institutional reforms, scientific advancements, educational institutions, and a new political culture, all of which have also impacted tribal societies.

Objective Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word ‘polis’?
2. The work ‘*African Political System*’ is associated with whom?
3. Who studied about Trobriand Islanders?
4. Where did the Kamal Tribal Community locate?
5. What is meant by CrPC?
6. To which type of economy, the Madia Gond tribe is associated?
7. Who defined religion as ‘the belief in spiritual beings?’
8. Who introduced the concept of totemism?
9. Who authored the book *The Golden Bough*?
10. Who authored the book *Peasant Society and Culture*?

Answers

1. Political Community
2. E.E. Evans Pritchard
3. Radcliff Brown
4. Madhya Pradesh
5. Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)
6. The horticultural economy
7. Sir Edward Burnett Tylor
8. Emile Durkheim
9. Frazer
10. Robert Redfield

Assignments

1. Explain the tribal political organization and examine the law and control system in the tribal society
2. Attempt on typologies of primitive economic systems and find out the major differences
3. What are the major kinship and gender related practices among the tribal societies?
4. Discuss the evolution of religion as a system of beliefs and explain the major concepts related such as animism, animatism, totemism, mana etc.
5. Define magic, religion and science and examine their major differences
6. Check major social process which led to the transformation of tribal society and elaborate on any three of them in detail.

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BLOCK

Social Stratification



UNIT

Caste and Class in India: Characteristics, Types and Changes

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ define caste and caste system in India.
- ♦ describe the characteristics and changes in the caste system.
- ♦ examine class and class structure in Indian society
- ♦ analyse the structural changes, inter-section and transformations of caste and class in India

Prerequisites

Have you watched the movie ‘Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar’ produced by the Ministry of Social Justice? The film will enlighten you the practice of caste system among the Hindu communities in India and how it discriminated the people based on their castes. However, the life of the Br. Ambedkar is portrayed, the fight against the exploitative caste system is highlighted in the movie and it captivated the minds of millions. Social stratifications based on caste and class is a reality and still practiced in the society. While the caste is exploitative and discriminative in terms of social ranking of individuals which is determined by birth, class is hierarchical based on everyone’s economic status.

Caste and class are two fundamental dimensions of social stratification in India, shaping the country’s social, economic, and political structures. The caste system, a hierarchical order rooted in Hindu religious traditions, has historically dictated individuals’ social status, occupational roles, and interactions. It is a closed system of stratification, where birth determines one’s caste position, limiting social mobility. On the other hand, class, often linked to economic factors such as wealth, education, and occupation, offers a more fluid structure where mobility is possible.

Despite constitutional safeguards and affirmative action policies aimed at reducing caste-based discrimination, caste continues to shape social and economic life in India. The expansion of market economies, urbanization, and education has contributed to the emergence of a middle class that transcends caste boundaries; yet caste-based exclusion and discrimination persist, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized communities. This chapter explores the historical roots of caste and class, their interaction in contemporary India, and the ongoing challenges in achieving social justice and equality.

Keywords

Caste, Hierarchy, Varna, Endogamy, Exogamy, Class structure, Mobility, Westernisation

Discussion

Social stratification is as old as human civilisation. Social stratification is a fundamental aspect of all societies. The study of social stratification deserves attention in Sociology because society is the subject of Sociology and social stratification is a structural aspect of society. In all societies, there are some forms of ranking in which members are placed in higher or lower, superior or inferior, prestigious or insignificant positions. Social stratification is a type of classification that operates within a structured system of inequality. Members are ranked according to predetermined criteria, thereby limiting members' access to resources, authority, and opportunities.

After gaining a fundamental understanding of Indian society and its diverse tribal, rural, and urban characteristics, you will learn about social stratification in India and the caste system. You will discover the fundamental characteristics of the caste system in this lesson, the distinctions between Varna and Jati, Caste and Class, the changing nature

of the caste system, and the concepts like *Sanskritization*, *Westernisation*, and dominant caste. The Spanish word “casta,” which means “race” or “a group having inherited qualities,” is the source of the English word “caste.” The Portuguese used the name to refer to “Jati,” or people from India. As you know, there are four castes: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Today, we find Jatis rather than Varnas. There are approximately 4000 Jatis and four Varnas, and the distinction between Varna and Jati will be made clear later in this chapter.

3.1.1 Definition of Caste

Hindu society and culture are inseparably entwined with the caste system. It is known as “Jati” in Hindi. Prof. S.C. Dube appears to favour the use of the term “Jati” rather than “caste,” even though the term “caste” is frequently used for “Jati” in sociological literature. According to Prof. Dube, not all of the inherent meanings of Jati can be explained by caste, so it would be appropriate

to use the word “Jati” instead of caste. To fully appreciate the meaning of the term “caste,” it would be appropriate to understand the concept of “Jati.” In his take on caste, British sociologist Blunt gave the following definition: “Caste is an endogamous or a collection of endogamous groups, bearing a common name, membership of which is hereditary, imposing on its member certain restrictions in the matter of social intercourse, either following a common traditional occupation or claiming a common origin, and generally regarded as forming a single homogeneous community.”

When we examine the definition given above, we discover some key characteristics of caste, including a common name, a shared ancestry, the practice of a hereditary profession, the formation of a single homogeneous category, and an endogamous nature.

A hereditary, endogamous group is referred to as a caste if they share a common name, a common traditional occupation, a common culture and are relatively immobile, have distinguishing statuses, and form a single homogenous society. According to Anderson and Parker, “Caste is that extreme form of social class organisation in which the position of individuals in the status hierarchy is determined by descent and birth.”

Ketkar, while explaining the caste system, considers “hereditary membership and endogamy” as the basis of caste. According to Ketkar, who adopts a functional perspective, these two characteristics have played a crucial role in the caste system. He notes that it has an organic structure and promotes harmony in relationships among various castes. Senart has described caste as “a closed corporation, rigorously hereditary bound with others (castes) by common occupation and equipped with a council (The characteristic of having a council could be discussed as there is no separate council system for each

caste) that rules its members by the sanction of certain penalties.”

Therefore, according to M.N. Srinivas, “a sociologist would define caste as a hereditary, endogamous, usually localised group, having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed, among other things, by the concepts of pollution and purity, and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste.”

3.1.1.1 Characteristics of Caste

Caste is an inseparable aspect of the Hindu religion and society. It is closely connected with the Hindu philosophy and religion, custom and tradition, marriage and family morals and manners, food and dress habits and occupations. It is strongly supported by rituals and ceremonies. It is deep rooted and a long-lasting social institution. In India, more than 2800 castes and sub-castes are found with all their peculiarities.

i. Segmental division of society

It indicates that caste is a major factor in Indian social stratification. There are numerous castes, each with a well-established way of life. Birth determines a person’s caste affiliation. Caste is thus a hereditary phenomenon.

ii. Hierarchy

According to the purity and impurity of their activities, different castes are graded from higher to lower ranks. It is comparable to a ladder where the pure caste is at the top, and the impure caste is at the bottom. For instance, teaching and performing rituals are two of the Brahmins’ occupations. They are positioned at the top of the hierarchy since it is thought to be the purest employment. Conversely, a sweeper’s occupation of cleaning and scavenging places them at the

bottom of the hierarchy due to their impure occupation.

iii. Restrictions on Food, Drink and Smoking

People of various castes don't share meals or drinks. Brahmins, for example, do not eat anything from any other caste. Similar customs in cultural transactions are maintained by higher caste in the hierarchical way. There are numerous subdivisions among Kanyakubj Brahmins in Uttar Pradesh, for instance. Food is not taken from one subdivision to another. There are two sorts of food: "kuchcha" and "pucca,". 'Pucca' which refers to ghee-prepared foods like puri, kachodi, and pulao and Kuchcha is the food prepared in water like rice, pulses, and vegetable curries. Only pucca food is exchanged between some classes. The high caste rarely touches or takes anything from the low caste.

iv. Endogamy

Caste members cannot marry people from other castes. Inter-caste unions are not permitted. However, inter-caste marriages are progressively rising among educated people, particularly in urban areas, and honour killing is also reported in many areas due to inter-caste marriages.

v. Purity and pollution

Deeds, occupations, languages, dress codes, and eating habits are all used to assess purity and contamination. Jobs like leather crafting, handling dead animals, sweeping, hauling trash, etc., are considered impure. After industrialisation, as technology got the upper hand on manual jobs, the practice of skill-based jobs using types of machinery and medical jobs and practices were also capitalised on by the higher caste of society.

vi. Occupational Association

Each caste is associated with particular employment, which it cannot alter. For instance, Kayasthas preserve financial records and write, whereas Brahmins engage in the priesthood and teaching. Business is practiced by Baniyas, while leatherwork is practiced by Chamars, etc. Some people have changed from their original careers due to the increased job options of industrialisation and urbanisation. However, traditional occupations are still practiced in rural regions.

vii. Social and Religious Disabilities and Privileges of a few sections

People from the lower caste are prohibited from performing many things, such as entering temples, using literary language, and using gold jewellery or umbrellas, among other things. But because of how much things have evolved; these limitations are no longer common.

viii. Distinction in Custom, Dress and Speech

Each caste has a unique way of living, including customs, dress patterns, and speech unique to that caste. The low caste speaks in a colloquial (local) language, while the high caste speaks in the pure language (sometimes literary terminology).

ix. Conflict Resolving Mechanisms or Caste Panchayath

Each caste has its resolving or dispute-resolution system, such as Caste Panchayats at the village and inter-village levels. Both caste laws and social conventions greatly safeguard each caste's status. These are openly enforced through the Caste Panchayat, the community's governing body. These Panchayats are given specific names according to their locations and castes, like

Kuldriya in Madhya Pradesh and Jokhila in South Rajasthan.

3.1.1.2 Difference between Varna and Jati

Two words that are crucial while examining the Indian social system are Jati and Varna. These divisions of traditional Indian culture have perplexed many outsiders, particularly the Westerners who tend to translate these terms literally. The caste system in India is well-known to the Western world, yet they erroneously treat Jati and Varna as an individual's caste. However, the two terms are not interchangeable. For the learner's convenience, we try to emphasise the distinctions between Jati and Varna.

Varna is first mentioned in the *Purusha Suktam* verse of the historic Sanskrit text; Rig Veda. The four Varnas combine to form the primordial being known as Purusha. Its mouth, arms, thighs, and feet comprise Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. These four Varnas also make up a society, and adhering to the Varna rules provides the means to maintain prosperity and order. In Hindi the word “Varna”, is literally translated as “colour.” The Varna system, however, had nothing to do with a person's skin tone. The Varna system categorises people according to their traits or qualities. Individual interests and personal inclinations are attended to with equal solemnity to uproot the conflict between personal choice and customary rules, even though a newborn in a particular Varna is not compelled to follow its life principles.

Varna Vyavastha is the only representation of the Indian social order that exists today and is recorded in books. There are roughly 200 Jatis in each region. Brahmins are at the top of the pan-Indic hierarchy for the Varna, followed by Kshatriyas in second place, Vaishyas in third place, and Shudras at the bottom. This order was consistent throughout India but is not present in Jati. As things

change, certain regions are dominated by Brahmins, while other communities populate others. But the power and authority are mostly entrusted or controlled by the higher or upper caste people.

On the other hand, religious ritual conditions are found in Varna vyavastha. Initially, untouchable people were not present in Varna. They are excluded from the Varna but existed as an essential component of the Jati. In the Varna, a person's status could not be changed; however, in the Jati, a person's status may be changed with an improvement in socioeconomic circumstances. Therefore, it is not appropriate to equate Varna and Jati.

Jati

Jati refers to localized, endogamous communities that are commonly translated as caste in India. For instance, describing Kashmiri Pandits as a Jati signifies that they form a distinct community based in Kashmir and do not exist elsewhere, maintaining marriage exclusively within their own group. When arranging marriages, individuals seek partners from within their Jati, referred to as *Swajati* (my Jati). In this context, Varna serves as a broad ideological framework that Jatis may use to assess their relative status, but it has only a theoretical connection to the practical functioning of Jati in everyday life.

Jatis were created much later in India to represent a community's trade or vocation. Gandhi's name derives from the Sanskrit word for fragrance, “Gandha,” but the Gandhis are the ones who engage in the perfume trade. Dhobis were persons who cleaned other people's clothes because the word “dhobi” is derived from the word “dhona,” which means to wash. Consequently, a jati is a group of people who work in a specific industry. In contemporary India, this classification system persisted until quite recently, and a person's surname was sufficient to inform others of his occupation. However, this caste system,



or the Jati system, is in decline thanks to a contemporary educational system and the absence of state discrimination.

The concept of *Jati* extends beyond the caste system and human society; as Ronald B. Inden explains, it functions similarly to the idea of a genus and applies to all forms of existence, including non-living entities. Every species can be classified as a *Jati*—for example, snakes, cows, and deer are all distinct *Jatis*. Similarly, men and women belong to different *Jatis*, just as humans and non-humans are also categorized as separate *Jatis*.

3.1.1.3 Caste System in Different Periods

The history of the caste belongs to the Vedic period. Instead of social stratification based on socioeconomic factors, people in ancient India's Vedic Period (roughly 1500–1000 BCE) were categorised according to their Varna or castes. The Vedic period flourished between 1500 and 1000 BCE when the caste system was implemented and recognised in ancient India. People were divided based on their Varna to reduce burdensome responsibilities, maintain caste purity, and create enduring order.

Each Varna citizen has a specific task assigned to them under this system. When Brahmin acts in a Kshatriya or Vaishya manner, they debase themselves and lose their right to pursue moksha or liberation. Because he personifies renunciation, austerity, piety, striving only for wisdom and developed intellect, a Brahmin (having become one by deed and birth) is considered the society's mouth. It is, according to the Vedas, the purest life form. A Kshatriya must uphold their commitment to their Varna duty. The same holds for Shudras and Vaishyas. Suppose Shudras stay focused on their daily responsibilities and resist temptations to indulge in excess self-indulgence, greed,

and immoral behaviour. In that case, they are the foundation of an economy and a powerful support system for a flourishing economic system.

3.1.1.4 Caste Structure

The Varna system appears to be in its infancy in the Vedas before being developed and modified in the Upanishads and Dharma Shastras. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras are four major castes which are highly mono-directional in the form of hierarchy. Still, multiple sub-castes were also found to maintain many caste-related practices mentioned in part of the characteristics of the caste system. Here, we are going through major varnas based on the hierarchy they created with non-humanistic discriminative practices.

a) Brahmin

Because they were endowed with the precepts and sermons that were to be delivered to all Varnas of society, Brahmins were revered as an embodiment of knowledge itself. They were revered not only because they were born Brahmins but also because they had abandoned the world and developed divine virtues. As a result, they were given the name Brahmins because they were thought to be constantly thinking about Brahmin. The Brahmin community consisted of priests, gurus, rishis, teachers, and academics. They were required to fulfil the Brahmacharya (celibacy) vow for the rest of their lives. Even married Brahmins were referred to as Brahmachari (celibate) because they engaged in a sexual activity solely for reproduction while maintaining mental distance from the act. However, Varna could become a Brahmin after extensive knowledge acquisition and intellectual development.

Because they stand for the connection between the four Varnas and the supreme knowledge of the gods, Brahmins were

the first choice of tutors for the newborn. This way, all people born in each Varna would stay rooted in the necessities of their lives because the ancestors' knowledge is upheld through guru-disciple practice. Brahmins were typically the embodiment of contentment and the destroyers of ignorance, guiding all seekers to the pinnacle of supreme knowledge; however, in some cases, they were forced to live in extreme adversity as warriors, traders, or farmers. King- and kingdom-related advice from those with the titles of Brahma Rishi or Maha Rishi has been sought after. All Brahmin men were permitted to marry among the first three Varnas; however, a Brahmin who weds a Shudra woman might lose some of his priestly statuses. However, if the Brahmin agreed, a Shudra woman would not be turned down.

Contrary to popular belief, Brahmin women were treated with unparalleled respect and were more highly regarded for their chastity than other women. According to Manu Smriti, a Brahmin woman may choose her husband but is only permitted to marry another Brahmin. In exceptional cases, she is permitted to wed a Kshatriya or a Vaishya, but she is not permitted to wed a Shudra. Intercaste marriages are subject to restrictions to prevent subsequent impurity in the offspring of the unions. A man of a lower caste who marries a woman of a higher caste is regarded as an unsatisfactory union that will produce ignoble offspring.

b) Kshatriyas

The warrior clan, kings, territorial lords, administrators, etc., were all Kshatriyas. The knowledge of weapons, warfare, penance, austerity, administration, moral conduct, justice, and the ruling were essential for a Kshatriya. From an early age, all Kshatriyas would be sent to a Brahmin ashram until they were fully versed in the necessary knowledge. They would learn more about administration in addition to performing austerities like the

Brahmins. They would seek advice from their Brahmin gurus on territorial sovereignty and moral conundrums because they believed that it was their fundamental duty to safeguard their territory, repel attacks, administer justice, govern morally, and extend peace and happiness to all of their subjects. They were permitted, with mutual consent, to wed a woman from any Varna. Shudra women could marry a Kshatriya, though a Kshatriya or Brahmin woman would be the preferred option.

Like their male counterparts, Kshatriya women had access to masculine disciplines, were well-versed in warfare, had the authority to carry out duties while the king was away, and was knowledgeable about royal affairs. Contrary to popular belief, a Kshatriya woman was equally capable of protecting her kingdom from enemies and teaching her offspring how to fight. A Kshatriya king's pure lineage was maintained to maintain the throne and assert control over certain areas.

c) Vaishyas

Agriculturists, traders, money lenders, and business people all fall under the third Varna or class. The Vaishyas visit the Brahmins' ashram to learn the moral principles of a good life and to abstain from malicious or unintentional wrongdoing. The possession and quality of a kingdom's cows, elephants, and horses, as well as their upkeep, affected the quality of life and the associated prosperity of the citizens, making cattle rearing one of the most esteemed occupations of the Vaishyas. Vaishyas would work closely with the kingdom's administrators to plan, carry out, and raise living standards by offering lucrative economic opportunities. They are seen as likely to disregard the law and despise the weak because their way of life exposes them to objects of instant gratification. As a result, the Kshatriya king would be preoccupied with settling disputes brought on by conflicts between Vaishyas.



Vaishya women also assisted their husbands in farming, raising cattle, and doing business, splitting the workload. They had the same freedom to choose their spouse among the four Varnas, though choosing a Shudra vehemently resisted. Women in the Vaishya community were legally protected, and remarriage was unquestionably common, just like in the other three Varnas. A Vaishya woman would have equal rights to the ancestral property if her husband dies untimely. She would share responsibility for raising her children while receiving support from her husband.

d) Shudras

The last Varna is revered for its members' obedient behaviour toward the obligations placed upon them in life, serving as the foundation of a thriving economy. Since there appear to be more restrictions on Shudra behaviour, scholarly perspectives on them are the most diverse. However, the Mahabharata also supports the inclusion of Shudras in ashrams and their learning of the Vedas, and the Atharva Veda permits Shudras to hear and memorise the Vedas. However, becoming officiating priests in sacrifices planned by kings was largely prohibited. Since Shudras are not double-born like the other Varnas, they are exempt from wearing the sacred thread. A Shudra woman could wed or practice informal marital relationships like *Sambantham* in Kerala, especially among Nair communities; with anyone from any of the four Varnas, but a Shudra man could only wed a Shudra woman.

Shudras would work for the Vaishyas in their commercial endeavours, the Kshatriyas in their palaces and princely camps, and the Brahmins in their ashrams. Even though they are the feet of the primordial being, educated citizens of higher Varnas would always view them as an important component of society because if the feet are weak, an orderly society

would be easily compromised. On the other hand, Shudras followed their masters' orders because they were motivated to do so by their knowledge that they could achieve moksha by performing the required tasks. Shudra women also served as the queen's assistants and close friends, travelling abroad with her after their marriages. Numerous Shudras were also permitted to work as traders, farmers, and other Vaishya-dominated professions. However, these deviations from daily obligations would only occur in exceptional circumstances, such as when one notices a downturn in the economy. The Shudras deserve unheard-of respect and admiration for their selflessness.

3.1.1.5 Functions and Dysfunctions of Caste System

a. Functions

Caste system maintained India's longstanding social structure. Giving each community a monopoly over a particular source of income has accommodated multiple communities and given people access to social security and recognition. A person's caste influences his marriage preferences. It has helped preserve culture and ensured productivity by passing down the knowledge and skills of a caste's hereditary occupation from one generation to the next. Caste, which teaches people about the culture, traditions, values, and social norms of their society, is important in the process of socialisation. Jajmani relationships has also facilitated caste-related interactions. Caste served as a union for its members, defending them from exploitation. It promoted political stability because the caste system generally shielded Kshatriyas from political rivalry, conflict, and violence. It maintained endogamy as a means of racial purity. Specialisation in a particular occupation resulted in high-quality production, which fueled economic growth. For instance: As a result, many

Indian handicrafts received recognition on a global scale.

b. Dysfunctions

Limiting the access to economic and intellectual opportunities to a specific population segment, caste system restrains economic and intellectual development and poses a significant obstacle to social reforms. It reduces labour productivity and hinders perfect mobility of labour, capital, and productive effort. It maintains the oppression of the socially and economically underprivileged castes, particularly the untouchables. Its insistence on practices like child marriage, the ban on widow remarriage, seclusion of women, etc., have put untold hardships on women. By granting Kshatriyas a political monopoly in the past and serving as a vote bank in the current political climate, it is opposed to true democracy. There are political organisations that only support one caste. It has impeded the development of a sense of national and collective identity and has served as a disintegrating rather than an integrating force. Caste conflicts are pervasive in politics, with demands for reservations in jobs and schools, inter-caste unions, etc. Examples include the Patidar community's agitation for reservations for the Jat community. It has made room for conversion to other religions. Because of the upper castes' tyranny, the lower castes' people are becoming increasingly converted to Islam and Christianity. The caste system impedes modernisation by resisting change by requiring people to behave strictly following caste norms.

3.1.1.6 Changes in the Caste System

The caste system has changed due to several processes, including Sanskritization, Westernisation, modernisation, dominant caste, industrialisation, urbanisation, and democratic decentralisation.

1. Sanskritization

It is the process by which any member of a lower caste can adopt the social mores, way of life, and cultural practises of a higher caste and then claim to be a member of that higher caste. However, they must give up their jobs and habits permitted to the lower castes, such as eating meat and drinking alcohol. It was forbidden for the untouchables to Sanskritize their status. Therefore, only members of the middle castes could learn Sanskrit. A caste must meet three requirements to become Sanskritized: (a) it must have a touchable status; (b) it must have better economic standing, and (c) it must propagate a story or myth asserting its membership in a high caste. It is a collective process, not an individual one. It takes time and doesn't happen instantly. Only positional change results from it; no structural change occurs. The caste structure remains unchanged, but a specific low caste moves to a higher caste in a specific location. A few members of lower castes in various parts of the country have elevated their status through this process.

In the 1940s, the Yadavs of Agra wanted to be Sanskrit. By caste, they are Chamars. The Yadavs prospered economically during the British era as shoe demand increased. They did this by spreading a myth that the Yadavs were Kshatriyas during the Treta Yug and were mentioned in Swami Atma Ram's Lomesh Ramayan. The Yadavs fled to the forest and began making leather goods to protect themselves as Parshuram was killing the Kshatriyas. They want to regain their Kshatriya status because they are now more prosperous economically. But because they were untouchables, the local Kshatriyas refused to accept their claim. The Yadavs eventually adapted to politicisation and developed into a vote bank in the local areas. Thus, unsuccessful Sanskritization resulted in caste upward mobility and politicisation.



2. Westernisation

It represents acclimating to western ways of speaking, dressing, and behaving. The British have had a significant influence in India. The characteristics of westernisation include (a) a rational outlook (a scientific and goal-oriented outlook); (b) an interest in material progress; (c) a reliance on modern communication processes and mass media; (d) the use of English as a second language in schools; (e) high social mobility, etc. The first to westernise themselves were the higher castes. The lower castes eventually adapted to this process as well. Particularly in urban areas, it has significantly changed the rigid caste system into a flexible one.

3. Modernisation

It is a process that heavily relies on a scientific outlook, rational attitudes, high levels of social mobility, mass mobilisation, empathy, and the belief in liberty, equality, and fraternity. It also heavily relies on specialisation and super-specialization in the workplace, active participation, and navigating complex organisational structures. Additionally, institutional, structural, attitudinal, and organisational changes are needed on a social, cultural, and individual level. This has significantly impacted the caste system because it has become more adaptable. Castes are gradually evolving into classes in urban areas. An emerging middle class with a logical outlook and a goal-oriented attitude can be found in India.

Westernisation is only one aspect of modernisation. No culture has to adopt western values to modernise itself. In our situation, modernisation is possible without completely rejecting tradition; rather, it involves combining tradition's rational elements with modernity's appropriate elements. Our caste system has adjusted well to contemporary practices, such as raising awareness of caste among the populace

through formal organisations and education.

4. Dominant Caste

The dominant caste phenomenon first appeared in the 20th century. It indicates that one caste becomes politically and economically powerful in the area, effectively ruling over all other castes. Having characteristics like (a) substantial land holdings in the region (good economic position), (b) political dominance (becoming a vote bank), (c) a sizable population, (d) high ritual status, (e) English-medium education, (f) history of agriculture (not tillers but landlords), and (g) history of violence can help a caste become dominant among (for dominance muscle power is essential). It has been discovered among lower castes, not just the high caste.

5. Industrialisation and Urbanization

The caste system has been impacted by both of these processes. Migration to urban areas has increased due to the expansion of industrial towns and other cities. It is impossible to adhere to strict caste laws in these areas. Inter-dining and space sharing are necessary for public settings like parks, eateries, canteens, hotels, offices, and transportation hubs like buses and trains. As a result, a flexible strategy has been adopted.

6. Democratic Decentralisation

Local self-governments have been established in the villages due to the introduction of the Panchayati Raj. Reservations have been made for members of lower castes in the panchayat. The lower castes now have chances to become more powerful.

7. Caste and Politics

Brahminical supremacy was an example of politics during the *Varna vyavastha*. Because

castes have developed into vote banks, and are politically aware they have identified with political parties, and each caste has its associations, it is said that castes and politics are closely related today. The relationship between caste and politics has aided the lower castes in gaining power. These castes were never been afforded the chance to express themselves. Today, they express their feelings through political lobbying and elections. One such instance is Dalit politics, in which the Dalits attempt to assert their identities and successfully seize power in several states. Factionalism, or the desire of the high castes to always keep things as they are, is the negative aspect of this connection. They cannot accept how the lower castes' dominant position has changed. As a result, high and low castes frequently fight in various parts of the nation. But this is just a temporary stage. Better education, public awareness campaigns, and good employment opportunities would make a smooth transition to a progressive society.

8. Caste and Economy

It has long been believed that the caste system has served society well, especially economically. There was a system called Jajmani system, a traditional employment system for the lower castes, especially the service caste. The lower caste, known as the Kamin, used to serve the higher castes, the Jajmans. The Kamins assisted the Jajmans with their specialised knowledge and services and were compensated in various ways (food grains). Jajmans and Kamins used to have a permanent and hereditary relationship, meaning that after a Jajman died, his son continued to be a Jajman. The same holds for the Kamins. As a result, in rural India, it was a useful relationship. But due to land reforms and the introduction of the market economy, the Jajmani system is gradually deteriorating. As a result of the aforementioned processes, the caste system has undergone numerous

changes and has adjusted to the new socio-economic situation. Nowadays, caste norms are not followed in urban areas. Caste enters into marriage because people continue to practise 'endogamy'. However, as was already mentioned, some people now accept interfaith and intercaste marriages.

3.1.1.7 Anti-Caste Movements

History demonstrates the existence of social divisions between caste and its inter sections of class, gender, and other categories for years in Indian society. Such divisions have altered the entire social structure of Indian society, pushing the oppressed group—whether Dalits, Adivasis, or women- to the margins of society through the traditional Brahmanical system of oppression. Dalits are the people who have been historically exploited economically, socially, and politically. Due to their inability to function in human society, they lived outside the village and were considered untouchable. This discrimination stems from Hindu society's long-standing tradition of caste hierarchies. Dalits have been oppressed in all areas of society for centuries due to this hierarchy. They now live in poverty and humiliation as a result of it. In India before independence, the Dalits were brutally exploited by the so-called upper castes, who fell outside the Varna system and were called outcastes.

Although India attained independence, the Dalits were not allowed to live in equality and dignity. In response to the long-standing atrocities committed against them, the Dalit Movement in India started. The movement known as the Dalit movement aims to challenge the socio-cultural hegemony of the upper castes. It is a mass movement that cries out for justice through speeches, books, plays, songs, cultural institutions, and any other means at its disposal. Therefore, it can be described as a Dalit-led movement that aims to achieve equality with all other castes in Hindu society. The Dalit Movement's



primary goal was to create a socially equal society in India.

Dalits are susceptible to all of society's vices without any specific employment. The Dalits were in a situation where they had to live like animals. The only thing needed was power to end that state of exploitation and live a life of dignity. Only power can cut the power on the other side. As a result, knowledge is the first thing needed to acquire power. Phule and Ambedkar strongly emphasised educating Dalits so that they would have the capacity for reason and judgement as well as political power, which would elevate their socioeconomic standing and grant them a life of dignity. They understood that the political tactic of acquiring power could be either a means to other ends or an end. In other words, the Dalits would not have to beg for money from the upper castes if they had power. They will also have more opportunities for employment and education. The connections the upper castes have with their fellow caste members in the political system, including the bureaucracy, judiciary, and legislature, allow them to enjoy social power regardless of their circumstances regarding their control over material resources.

Jyothirao Phule stated that without education, wisdom was lost; without wisdom, morals were lost; without morals, development was lost; without development, wealth was lost; without wealth, the Shudras were ruined; so much has happened through lack of education. Phule said that the lack of knowledge caused all this suffering and disaster. Thus, Phule was the one who, for the first time, understood the enormous value of education. Thomas Paine's essay "*The Rights of Man*" served as Phule's inspiration as he sought the educational path that could only bring the Dalits together in their fight for equality. Ambedkar, who fought alongside Gandhi to grant the Dalits their right to equality, led the movement. Gandhi's politics were unambiguously centred on the

'defense of caste' while maintaining social order like the Brahmins.

Gandhi, who was heavily influenced by Brahmanical laws and was widely considered as the supreme leader of Hindu society, could not accept Ambedkar and his ideals to empower the Dalit communities. Although he was fighting for Dalits' rights, he was not prepared for an inter caste union because he understood that only marriage could protect caste. Gandhi claimed he was untouchable by choice and only engaged in power politics. The Poona Pact was signed after the Dalits went on a hunger strike to protest the reservation of their right to choose their leaders. He was unable to satisfy the untouchables or alter the attitudes of Hindu upper castes because discrimination against Dalits and untouchability were still persisted. Based on the Vedas, Smritis, and Shastras, Hinduism is accountable to the untouchables for the oppressive and exploitative caste system. Inequality in Hindu society impedes individual development, which impedes society as a whole. The same inequality prevents society from harnessing the potential within each person.

Ambedkar argued that to defeat Brahmanical power and lead the movement, this inequality should be replaced by equality. To do this, the Dalits must be educated and united. Ambedkar advised us to "educate, organise, and agitate." Education, the main source of reason, gives human minds a thorough understanding of the outside world, enabling them to understand the reality of a phenomenon. Knowing the truth about Brahmanism in Indian society would be beneficial and encourage people to protest against cruel caste-based practices. Only when genuine agitation starts will the Dalits be able to rise to power and triumph in the fight against exploitation.

The anti-caste movements occurred in different parts of the nation; it included

Vaikom Satyagraha for temple entrance for lower caste community. In Travancore, Kerala, Ayyankali restored the lower caste community's right to use the public roads. This movement was known as "*Villuvandi Samaram*," (Bullock Cart Agitation). Today, these movements are celebrated as the most significant events in Kerala's history of Dalit movements. Another significant movement is Self-Respect Movement (Suyamariyathai) and Political movement, namely Dravidar Kazhagam led by Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, also known as Periyar or Thanthai Periyar, an Indian social activist and politician from Tamil Nadu who lived from 17 September 1879 to 24 December 1973. Periyar is considered as the "Father of the Dravidian movement,".

3.1.2 Class: Characteristics, Types and Changes

Social class is considered a type of social group that is neither legally defined nor based on religious sanction. It is typically understood as a layer of society consisting of individuals who share similar social standings. Key factors that determine class include wealth, income, education, and occupation. Social class is relatively open, meaning that anyone who meets the necessary criteria can become a member. Societies contain multiple classes, which are ranked in a hierarchical order, mainly according to wealth and income. These economic differences manifest in distinct lifestyles and consumption habits. Social classes are a defining characteristic of industrial societies (Bottomore 1962: 188). For instance, in a capitalist society, we commonly find a class of capitalists and various working classes, among others.

In India, the current class structure emerged during British rule. However, this does not imply that class distinctions were absent in pre-colonial India. Rather, class differences were less pronounced

before the British period. One contributing factor was the perceived self-sufficiency of village communities. Since villages typically produced only what was needed for local consumption, there was minimal surplus, leading to less economic differentiation among villagers. British rule in India had a profound and lasting impact on Indian society, leading to significant transformations. Some of these major changes are outlined in the following sections.

a. Land Reforms and Transformation of Agricultural Classes

The British introduced individual land ownership through various land reforms in the 18th century, such as the Permanent Settlement, Ryotwari Settlement, and Mahalwari Settlement. These reforms transformed land into private property, making it a marketable commodity that could be bought, sold, or mortgaged. Additionally, a new system for determining land revenue and requiring its payment in cash was established. This commercialization of agriculture contributed to the expansion of trade and commerce in India.

b. Trade and Commerce

The British trade policies revolved around two key objectives: (i) ensuring a steady supply of raw materials for industries in Britain and (ii) facilitating the sale of British manufactured goods in India. The latter had a devastating impact on the local economy, particularly in towns and villages that depended on traditional handicrafts.

c. Industrial Growth and Railways

The growth of trade and commerce in India was accompanied by a rapid expansion of the transport system. From the mid-19th century, railway networks developed extensively, primarily to facilitate the supply of raw materials to British industries. The



construction of railways and roads also provided opportunities for British capital investment in India. Additionally, these improvements enhanced troop mobility and helped in maintaining law and order. Over time, Indian traders and merchants accumulated substantial savings, which served as capital for the establishment of Indian-owned industries.

d. State and Administrative System

Even before these economic and infrastructural changes, the British government had established a vast administrative system to govern the territories they had conquered. Managing such a large bureaucracy required a significant number of educated personnel. Since it was impractical to recruit sufficient staff from Britain, the British authorities recognized the necessity of introducing Western education in India. As a result, schools, colleges, and universities were established to provide Western education, supporting both the expanding economy and the growing administrative structure.

3.1.2.1 Class in India

The social class structure in India, as it exists today, originated during British rule. However, this does not mean that class distinctions were entirely absent in pre-colonial India. Rather, social stratification was less pronounced before British rule. The emergence of new social classes was an uneven process, varying across different regions and communities. This disparity occurred because the social changes brought by British rule spread at different rates and intensities, influenced by the expansion of political power in India. For instance, Bengal was the first region where the zamindars and tenants emerged as distinct social classes. Similarly, the earliest industrial enterprises were established in Bengal and Bombay, leading to the formation of industrialists and workers in these areas. As a result, the

British introduced a complex administrative system and modern education first in Bengal and Bombay.

The emergence of new social classes varied across different communities. This disparity existed because certain communities had already been engaged in specific economic, social, or educational activities before British rule. For instance, the Baniyas, traditionally traders in the social structure, were among the first to adopt modern commerce, banking, and industrial ventures. Similarly, Brahmins were the earliest to embrace modern education and join the professional classes. These communities were quick to adapt to new opportunities because they already possessed the foundational skills and inclinations for these occupations.

In rural areas, classes consist principally of a) landlords, b) peasant proprietors, c) tenants d) agricultural labourers and e) artisans

a. Landlords

The land reform measures introduced after Independence in the 1950s did not result in a socially uniform class of cultivators. However, they did lead to the decline of the Zamindars, who lost their authority to collect taxes from peasants. As a result, their landholdings were reduced, and their economic, political, and social dominance was weakened. While a small fraction of former Zamindars continue to live as rentiers, most have become actively involved in managing and improving their agricultural estates.

b. Peasant Proprietors

Peasant proprietors can be classified into three main categories:

- 1. Rich Peasants:** These are landowners with substantial holdings. They do not engage in fieldwork themselves but oversee cultivation and actively manage and improve their land.

2. Middle Peasants: They own moderately sized landholdings and are generally self-sufficient. They primarily rely on family labor to cultivate their land.

3. Poor Peasants: These landowners have small holdings that are insufficient to support their families. To sustain themselves, they often rent additional land or work as laborers to supplement their income. This group forms a significant portion of the agricultural population.

c. Tenants

Before Independence, tenants were classified into different categories, including tenants, subtenants, and sharecroppers. In zamindari regions, multiple subgroups existed between the zamindars and the actual cultivators, who were mostly sharecroppers. Generally, tenants had occupancy rights and could not be evicted, while subtenants had some security of tenure but remained vulnerable to eviction. Sharecroppers, however, had no security and were dependent on wealthier tenants and subtenants.

With the introduction of tenancy reform programs, many tenants and subtenants were converted into peasant proprietors. However, sharecroppers benefited little from these reforms. The second phase of land reforms, which imposed ceilings on landholdings, led to a reduction in tenancy, but sharecropping persisted. Today, sharecroppers remain the most significant, if not the only, segment of the tenant class in rural India. Despite their numerical strength, they are weak in terms of organization and political influence, though they continue to be a crucial part of peasant movements in India.

d. Agricultural Labourers

Agricultural laborers can be broadly

categorized into three types. Some owned or cultivated a small plot of land while also earning their livelihood by selling their labor. Others were landless and depended entirely on working for others. In exchange for their labor, agricultural laborers received very low wages, often paid in kind, such as food grains like paddy, wheat, and pulses. Occasionally, cash was given instead of goods. A standardized measure was typically used to determine these payments, and in many cases, payments in kind continued alongside cash payments.

The government's efforts to abolish bonded labor and establish minimum wage structures, along with employment-generating programs, show concern for this group. However, these initiatives have had limited effectiveness. As a result, agricultural laborers remain the most disadvantaged group in rural society.

e. Artisans

Rural artisans include trades such as carpenters (Badhai), ironsmiths (Lohar), and potters (Kumhar), among others. Not every village had these artisans, but under the Jajmani system, a single family of these occupational castes often served multiple villages. Rural artisans and craftsmen suffered greatly under British rule, as they were unable to compete with the mass-produced, inexpensive industrial goods.

3.1.2.2 Urban Class Structure

In the urban areas social classes comprise principally (a) capitalists (commercial and industrial), (b) corporate sector (c) professional classes, (d) petty traders and shopkeepers and (e) working classes.

I. Capitalist Classes

Under British rule, production in India shifted towards market-oriented production. This expansion of the internal market led



to the growth of a class of traders involved in domestic commerce. At the same time, India became connected to the global market, fostering the rise of a merchant class focused on export and import businesses. As a result, a commercial middle class emerged in the country. This mainly belongs to Commercial and Industrial sector.

II. Corporate Sector

Any organization that is owned and controlled by the government is classified as a public sector unit, while those not owned by the government fall under the private sector. The private sector consists of firms and organizations that are exclusively owned, controlled, and managed by private individuals or entities. These private sector firms can be further divided into two categories: individually owned and collectively owned. Collectively owned firms are further classified into i) partnership firms ii) joint-stock companies and iii) co-operatives.

The most significant of these is the joint-stock company, commonly referred to as the corporate sector. Joint-stock companies that are not part of the public sector are collectively known as the private corporate sector. The Indian corporate sector is large and highly diversified. Since the post-liberalization era of the 1990s, this sector's role in the Indian economy has expanded significantly.

III. Professional Classes

The rapid industrialization and urbanization in post-independence India created extensive employment opportunities in industries, trade, commerce, construction, transport, services, and various other economic sectors. At the same time, the government established a vast institutional framework with a complex bureaucratic structure across the country, providing significant employment. Jobs

in these sectors, whether in the private or public sector, require qualifications such as education, training, and skills. Bureaucrats, management executives, technocrats, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and journalists are examples of professionals with these specialized skills.

IV. Petty Traders and Shopkeepers

This class emerged with the growth of modern cities and towns. They serve as intermediaries between producers or wholesalers and the mass of consumers. These traders buy goods from producers or wholesalers and sell them to consumers, making their living from the profit margin between the purchase and sale prices. This group includes self-employed petty shopkeepers, traders, vendors, and hawkers, as well as semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the informal sector.

V. Working Classes

The origins of the working class can be traced back to British rule, emerging as a direct result of the modern industries, railways, and plantations established in India during that time. This class grew in size as sectors like plantations, factories, mining, industry, transport, and railways expanded in India. The Indian working class was mainly composed of impoverished peasants and displaced artisans who had been economically devastated.

3.1.2.3 Caste and Class Nexus

The distinction between caste as a real phenomenon and class as a constructed category is problematic. Both caste and class are tangible and empirical, and they interact with and incorporate each other. The relationship between caste and class is dynamic, full of contradictions, and neither can fully explain India's social reality on its own. Violating caste norms

does not eliminate caste as a form of social stratification, indicating that caste and class are intertwined.

The caste-class nexus approach examines caste and class as mutually inherent phenomena. It goes beyond individual interactions and connects macro-level concepts to the ground realities. The caste-class nexus framework emphasizes the need to understand both caste and class to fully comprehend social reality. It defines 'nexus' as a set of connections that drive structural and cultural changes. This framework acknowledges that there is no direct correspondence between caste and class, but instead highlights their interdependence, contradictions, and the social power dynamics at play.

Andre Beteille notes that caste, class, and power in the Tanjore village he studied overlap to some extent, yet also intersect in complex ways. He observes that many

areas of social life are gradually becoming "caste-free." Various traditions, such as the Brahman tradition, martial Rajput, Indian craftsmen, and merchants, existed side by side, illustrating the complexity of India's social structure.

Kathleen Gough's analysis of the mode of production in India shows the interconnectedness of caste, kinship, family, marriage, and the forces of production. In this framework, class relationships are central to understanding caste and kinship in India. Some scholars even explain the varna and jajmani systems in terms of class relations and the mode of production. Consequently, caste and class often represent the same structural reality. Caste conflicts can also be seen as class conflicts, as upper and lower castes correspond to high and low social classes, respectively. Castes also function as interest groups, with caste associations engaging in economic and political activities for their members.

Recap

- ◆ Caste is an endogamous group or a collection of endogamous groups
- ◆ A hereditary, endogamous group is referred to as a caste if they share a common name, a common traditional occupation, a common culture, relatively immobile
- ◆ According to M.N. Srinivas, "a sociologist would define caste as a hereditary, endogamous, usually localised group, having a traditional association with an occupation
- ◆ In India, more than 2800 castes and sub-castes are found with all their peculiarities.
- ◆ Varna is first mentioned in the *Purusha Suktam* verse of the historic Sanskrit text; Rig Veda
- ◆ The four Varnas combine to form the primordial being known as Purusha. Its mouth, arms, thighs, and feet comprise Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras respectively.



- ◆ Varna Vyavastha is the only representation of the Indian social order that exists today and is recorded in books. There are roughly 200 Jatis in each region.
- ◆ Jati refers to localized, endogamous communities that are commonly translated as caste in India.
- ◆ The Varna system appears to be in its infancy in the Vedas before being developed and modified in the Upanishads and Dharma Shastras.
- ◆ Vaishya women also assisted their husbands in farming, raising cattle, and doing business, splitting the workload.
- ◆ The dominant caste phenomenon first appeared in the 20th century. It indicates that one caste becomes politically and economically powerful in the area, effectively ruling over all other castes.
- ◆ Key factors that determine class include wealth, income, education, and occupation.
- ◆ Agricultural laborers can be broadly categorized into three types. Some owned or cultivated a small plot of land while also earning their livelihood by selling their labor
- ◆ In the urban areas social classes comprise principally (a) capitalists (commercial and industrial), (b) corporate sector (c) professional classes, (d) petty traders and shopkeepers and (e) working classes

Objective Questions

1. Which is the basis of the caste in the opinion of Ketkar?
2. What is food prepared in water known as?
3. In which Veda, Varna is mentioned for first time?
4. What is the meaning of 'Varna'?
5. Who stated that "without education, wisdom was lost; without wisdom, morals were lost; without morals, development was lost; without development, wealth was lost"?
6. Who called for "educate, organize and agitate"?
7. Who led the movement of "*Villuvandi Samaram*"?
8. Who is known as father of the Dravidian movement?
9. Who introduced the Ryotwari system in India?
10. In which village, Andre Beteille did study about caste, class and power?

Answers

1. Hereditary membership and endogamy
2. Kachcha Food
3. Rig Veda
4. Colour
5. Jyothirao Phule
6. Ambedkar
7. Ayyankali
8. Periyar or Thanthai Periyar
9. The British
10. Tanjore

Assignments

1. Define caste and examine its major characteristics
2. Do you believe that caste contribute to the functioning of the society? Discuss major dysfunctions of caste system
3. Observe your neighborhood and identify the existing caste structure in your area
4. Do you think that anti-caste movements were successful in altering the social wellbeing of the lower castes? Locate the major anti-caste movements and its prominent leaders in Kerala.
5. Define class and examine major factors that led to the changes in the social class system in India.
6. Elaborate rural class structure and discuss their transformation.

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UNIT

Gender and Intersectionality in the Indian Context

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the concept of gender in India.
- ◆ comprehend gender types and dimensions in Indian society.
- ◆ explain gender intersectionalities with caste and class in the Indian context

Prerequisites

Suppose you have been blessed with a baby girl or baby boy which color do you prefer for their dress and toys? No doubt most of us will select pink for girl and blue for boy. Isn't it? Unknowingly pink color is attached with women folk whereas blue for men. This is an example for gender stereotyping. Likewise, most of the statuses and roles in the society are discriminated towards gender. Social conviction related to men and women is reflected as practices which subsequently enrooted in the emergence of patriarchy; the male centric society.

Gender in Indian society is deeply embedded within its social, cultural, and economic structures, shaping roles, identities, and power dynamics. Rooted in historical traditions and religious beliefs, gender norms have long dictated distinct expectations for men and women, often reinforcing patriarchal structures. While ancient texts and traditions have recognized multiple gender identities, the dominant social framework has traditionally placed men in positions of authority while assigning women roles centered around family and domestic responsibilities. Over time, movements for gender equality, legal reforms, and increasing education and economic opportunities have challenged these rigid norms, fostering greater participation of women and marginalized gender groups in public and professional life. Despite progress, gender inequality remains a pressing issue in India, manifesting

in various forms such as wage gaps, underrepresentation in politics and leadership roles, and gender-based violence. Societal attitudes towards gender are influenced by factors such as caste, class, region, and religion, creating diverse experiences of gendered realities across the country.

Indian women are undervalued, underemployed, and underpaid, which limits their access to education and healthcare and their ability to advance personally and professionally. The challenges faced by Indian women in society, in the workplace, and within organisations may influence multinational corporations and Indian organisations to implement diversity policies and practices beyond individual identities. By examining the intersection of gender, colour, caste, ethnicity, religion, marital status, and class as sources of discrimination against women in Indian society and workplaces, this chapter aims to present the gender dimensions of Indian society, intersectionality in the Indian context, challenges facing by women due to the intersectionality of gender and other forms of identities impacting on their personal and professional lives.

Keywords

Gender, Patriarchy, Intersectionality, Positive discrimination, Social stratification

Discussion

Gender is a socially constructed concept that shapes the expectations, roles, responsibilities, and behaviors of individuals across all societies. There has been growing recognition of the need to promote gender equality in education. However, most initiatives so far have primarily focused on achieving gender parity—ensuring that boys and girls have equal access to educational opportunities. While gender parity is easier to measure, it represents only one aspect of gender equality, which is a broader and more complex goal. True gender equality goes beyond access and requires that both boys and girls receive the same quality of education

and attain similar learning outcomes.

Social construction is an ongoing social process in which individuals and broader social dynamics are deeply interconnected. Every perception or representation of the world is shaped by a person's experiences within society and their interactions with various social processes. As a result, social construction is often seen as inherently subjective, as it reflects individual perspectives and lived experiences. Additionally, it is influenced and shaped by the interests of specific groups or social classes, which can further reinforce particular viewpoints or power structures.

3.2.1 Gender: Definition and Meaning

Gender is a socially constructed concept shaped by socio-cultural influences throughout an individual's life. Gender identity varies across societies, as it is influenced by how different cultures perceive and assign roles to males and females. Factors such as ethnicity, historical and cultural background, family values, and religion play a significant role in shaping one's gender identity. A common misconception is the interchangeable use of "gender" and "sex." While sex refers to the biological distinction between male and female, gender is learned through socialization rather than inherited.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as: "Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed."

As a structural component of society, gender holds sociological significance because it serves as a mechanism through which society regulates its members. Similar to social class and race, gender is often used as a basis for social categorization, sometimes leading to prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice refers to a set of attitudes, often negative, toward individuals based on their group membership. This highlights the broader impact of gender as a social construct that influences individual experiences and societal interactions.

The concept of gender as a social construct emphasizes that gender identity is shaped by societal influences rather than biological differences. Various social processes contribute to the transmission of gender expectations, starting from birth. A newborn is immediately introduced to a "blue" or "pink" world, reinforcing societal

norms about masculinity and femininity. Parental behavior further shapes gender identity through expectations about how children should act and the types of toys they are given.

For instance, girls are often encouraged to play with dolls and exhibit emotional and nurturing traits, whereas boys are expected to play with action figures and display assertiveness and rationality. Gender stereotyping extends to clothing choices, toys, and even the language used when interacting with young children. Through observation and imitation, children internalize these gendered messages and adjust their behavior accordingly, reinforcing the social construction of gender. Society shapes gender and classifies individuals in a manner similar to how it categorizes people based on age, ethnicity, race, social class, and status. However, gender classification often serves as a means of controlling individuals and reinforcing social inequalities. While there are inherent biological and anthropological distinctions between the sexes, these differences should not be used to justify rigid gender stereotypes or predefined roles. Regardless of its form, sexism has harmful effects, leading to the stereotyping of women and contributing to prejudice and discrimination.

3.2.1.1 Gender Vs Sex

The distinctions between male and female sexes are primarily anatomical and physiological, with "sex" referring to biological differences. For example, males and females have different internal and external reproductive organs, and their bodies produce different types and levels of hormones.

Sex and gender both describe differences between males and females, but they are not the same. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, they have distinct



on reducing poverty. While the principle of gender equity in the workplace is widely accepted, discriminatory practices continue to persist in many organizations despite regulations against them.

To tackle gender discrimination effectively, it is crucial to create an inclusive and supportive environment and to involve both men and women, as gender biases are deeply ingrained in culture. A holistic approach that includes men as part of the solution is necessary to overcome these biases.

Empowering women and advancing gender equality is essential for accelerating sustainable development. Ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls is not only a fundamental human right but also creates a ripple effect that benefits other areas of development. Since 2000, the UNDP, in partnership with the UN and the global community, has made gender equality a central focus of its work, leading to significant progress. More girls are now attending school compared to 15 years ago, and gender parity in primary education has been achieved in many regions. Women now make up 41 percent of paid workers outside of agriculture, up from 35 percent in 1990. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to build on these successes and eliminate discrimination against women and girls globally. Despite this progress, inequalities persist in access to paid employment in some regions, and significant gender gaps remain in the labor market. Challenges such as sexual violence, exploitation, the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, and gender bias in public decision-making continue to be major obstacles. Gender equality is one of the 17 Global Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and an integrated approach is essential for advancing progress across all these goals.

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a. Gender Equity

Gender equity is the process of fairly distributing resources, programs, and decision-making opportunities to both males and females, without discrimination based on sex, and addressing any disparities in the benefits available to each gender. This involves ensuring that everyone has access to a broad range of opportunities to attain social, psychological, and physical well-being. Gender equity does not necessarily mean offering the same programs and facilities to both genders; instead, it requires providing girls and women with a diverse array of activities and programs tailored to their needs, interests, and experiences. As a result, some activities may be the same as those offered to boys and men, while others may be adapted or entirely different. Human rights legislation, such as the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, upholds the principles of equity and supports affirmative action programs to address and eliminate disadvantages.

The terms equality and equity are sometimes confused, and their usage can vary depending on the sector and country. In Canada, for example, the concept of gender equity is commonly used in the sport and physical activity sector. Unlike equity, gender equality involves distributing resources, programs, and decision-making in a way that ensures males and females receive the same amount—meaning each would get 50% of resources, facilities, and access to identical programs. For example, if there is a program for males, there would also be one for females. While the idea of treating everyone equally seems admirable, the principle of equality overlooks the fact that individuals differ in their abilities, interests, resources, and experiences.

3.2.2 Gender Dimensions in Indian Society

The word gender has been given a very specific meaning when used sociologically or as a conceptual category. In its most recent incarnation, “gender” refers to the sociocultural categorisation of men and women, their social roles, and other social constructs. It is an analytical tool for comprehending how society views men and women. Women’s studies also referred to as feminist studies, is an interdisciplinary academic field that examines socially and culturally defined gender roles or explores politics, society, media, and history from a feminist or women’s perspective. It has a close connection to gender studies as a whole. Women Studies is the study of topics about women and their historical role and what they have given back to society.

The distinction between sex and gender was created to address the widespread predilection to blame women’s subordination on their physical makeup. “gendering” refers to the social and cultural “packaging” done for boys and girls beginning at birth. According to Ann Oakley, one of the earliest feminist scholars to use this idea, gender refers to the social categorisation of men and women as “masculine” and “feminine.” Typically, biological data can be used to determine whether a person is male or female. It is impossible to determine someone’s gender similarly because the standards are cultural and change depending on the time and place. Both the consistency of sex and gender diversity must be acknowledged. Gender has no biological basis, and sex and gender are not naturally associated.

To define male and female, masculinity and femininity, and to simultaneously structure and regulate how individuals interact with society, gender consists of a pattern of relationships that develops over time. It permeates every aspect of society,



including our institutions, public areas, works of art, fashion, and movement. Every setting, including government offices and street games, incorporates gender into the experience. It is ingrained in the community, including the media, church, school, and neighborhood. And there is a logical connection between each of these contexts and circumstances. The fact that “women” and “gender” now occupy relatively prominent positions in development discourses and practises is a result of modernisation. It is important to comprehend gender clearly as a sociocultural variable that cuts across all other variables. It is an all-encompassing factor in that gender can be used to explain every other factor that cuts across multiple categories, including race, class, age, ethnicity, etc. Gender roles are ingrained through socialisation; they are malleable rather than fixed. Gender systems are institutionalised through legislation, culture, traditions, political and economic systems, and educational systems. When using a gender perspective, the system that determines gender roles and responsibilities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making potentials is focused rather than on specific women and men.

It’s crucial to stress that women are not synonymous with the concept of gender. Women, men, and their interactions are all included in the term “gender.” Men and women should be concerned with and involved in promoting gender equality. Research on gender perspectives has recently placed a much stronger direct emphasis on men. The increased attention paid to men is done so using three main strategies. First, men must be recognised as allies in the fight for gender equality and given more opportunities to participate. Second, the understanding that men must alter their attitudes and behaviours in many areas, such as those on health and reproductive rights before gender equality can be achieved. Thirdly, gender systems that are in place in many contexts are harmful to both men and women because they place

unreasonable expectations on men and dictate how they should act. Both men and women are conducting a great deal of fascinating research on male identities and masculinity.

Status of Women in India

The history of women in India has been turbulent, from their sharing status with men in antiquity through the low points of the mediaeval era to the promotion of equal rights by numerous reformers. Women have held important positions in India’s modern history, including those of President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and Leader of the Opposition. In the Lower House of the parliament, the Lok Sabha, as of 2011, both the Speaker and the Opposition Leader were female. However, discrimination against women in India at socio-economic and cultural aspects is a reality. According to a global poll by Thomson Reuters, India is the “fourth most dangerous country” for women.

Knowing the historical, political, cultural, and economic factors that shape society is necessary to better understand women’s current social position. It’s also important to take a quick look at earlier societies because some traditions and ideals that still influence women today have historical origins. Due to various sociocultural factors, women have remained largely invisible and marginalised in our society. Romila Thaper notes the countless variations in women’s status in Indian society while talking about the place of women in Indian history. The variations can be attributed to factors such as family structure, cultural milieu, class, caste, property rights, etc. Finding reliable sources that can aid in creating a profile of Indian women is a serious challenge, in addition to providing a uniform picture of women’s status at different stages of development.

According to Nambisan, “women as wives and mothers and subordinate partners in domestic life” has long been a deeply

ingrained ideological tenet of Indian society. The clear message that “Pita, Pati, Putra” (Father, Husband, Son) conveys to young girls is that they must obey their fathers’ orders during their formative years, their husbands’ orders during their marriages, and their sons’ orders during their widowhood. The idea that daughters are only visitors in their mothers’ home and that, after marriage, their rightful place is in their husband’s family, from which she can only depart upon death, is ingrained in them from an early age.

The work of John Locke, who based many of their ideas on the analytical separation of the public and private spheres, can be used to trace the origins of these fundamental presumptions about what constitutes the Anglo-American tradition. This widely held belief in the transcultural and transhistorical universality of the public-private split—namely that citizens or heads of household were active in the public sphere—was adopted by the Anglo-American disciplines. In a private sphere where “every man’s home is his castle”, and he is free to act however he pleases without interference from the state, this subsumed women into the household or family. This analytical exclusion of women from public life sparked debate about the male-dominated world from which women were rightfully excluded as members of society. In turn, the private sphere was perceived as existing outside the arena and not a legitimate subject matter for the discipline, at least regarding women. However, the inconsistency and gender bias that underpin the ideology of separate spheres are exposed when governments are seen as having a right to regulate women’s access to abortion, sexuality, and male violence against female family members.

3.2.3 Gender: Issues and Trends

Due to the fundamental distinctions and disparities between men and women,

gender is perceived as a social problem. Some broad trends indicate questions that should always be considered even though these differences and inequalities may appear in various ways in particular nations or industries. The components listed below could be used to investigate how and why gender based disparities and inequalities is important in a particular circumstance.

I. Inequalities in Power

Within formal decision-making structures (such as governments, community councils, and policy-making institutions), gender differences in power should be examined and understood. The fact that women frequently have different priorities, needs, and interests than men is frequently not apparent due to the underrepresentation of women and the low visibility of women’s perspectives. Priorities at the national, regional, or subregional levels, as well as the particular needs and priorities of a community, are frequently determined without the meaningful input of gender disparities within households. There are documented differences in access to resources and the ability to negotiate and make decisions, and these differences exist within households.

The study of differences and inequalities at the household level is important for understanding various important issues, such as how well men and women can respond to financial incentives, how to design efficient HIV/AIDS prevention strategies, and how to create fair and appropriate social security policies.

II. Differences in Legal Status and Entitlements

Women are frequently denied equal rights to personal status, security, land, inheritance, and employment opportunities by law or practice, despite national constitutions and international agreements that affirm equal rights for men and women. In addition to



being important in and of itself, addressing these barriers for women is crucial for developing effective national strategies for raising economic growth and productivity, lowering poverty, and achieving sustainable resource management.

III. Division of Labor within the Economy

Women are more likely than men to work in jobs that are paid by the law and “non-standard” work (part-time, temporary, home-based), and they are also more likely to have less access than men to productive assets like education, skills, property, and credit. In most countries, women and men are distributed differently across manufacturing, formal and informal sectors, agriculture, and occupations.

IV. Inequalities in the Domestic/Unpaid Sector

Women typically carry out the duties and chores associated with caring for and nurturing the family in most nations. These responsibilities increase the workload for women and frequently prevent them from taking the initiative or growing their businesses. Recent studies have attempted to show the connections between this “reproductive work” and the “productive” sector of the economy, particularly the dependence of all productive activities on the development.

V. Violence Against Women

Gender inequality also takes the form of gender-based violence, which can be committed by a woman’s intimate partner (domestic violence), an enemy army, or even as a tool of attempted “ethnic cleansing.”

VI. Discriminatory Attitudes

Inequalities between men and women manifest themselves in various ways that are hard to quantify and alter. Gender stereotypes

are frequently the basis for beliefs about proper conduct, independence, and aptitudes, which differ for men and women. The tendency of ideas and practises to reinforce and reflect one another (the one justifying the other) adds to the difficulty of enacting change.

As a response to the exclusion of women from preexisting critical frameworks, the concept of gender emerged. It aimed to change the philosophical theory of knowledge and the substantive context of these disciplines. Because it ignored the skewed relationships between men and women, it became common practice in social sciences to analyse society regarding caste, class, and race. This phrase was created to cast doubt on the new concepts and theories that could explain the structure and dynamics of male-female relationships and how they overlap in a broader framework of power relations.

3.2.4 Intersectionality of Caste, Class and Gender Identity

Black feminist activists in the United States (US) in the 1980s and early 1990s are most frequently credited with the concept of multiple and compound discrimination and inequality. Kimberle Crenshaw, who pointed out the shortcomings of US anti-discrimination law in addressing the experience of black women, coined the term “intersectionality.” The experiences of people who intersect with a marginalised racial identity (such as black people) and sex (such as women) were said to be more likely to be disregarded by the state and law as well as by social movements. Social researchers from various disciplines have since noted the import of an intersectional approach in understanding the inequality, injustice, and discrimination faced by marginalised communities worldwide on different axes, such as disability or race.

In her 1991 essay titled *“Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,”* Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the idea of “intersectionality.” She argued that identity politics “frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences” even though it is effective at identifying and combating widespread systems of dominance. She made the case that black women experience particular and aggravating forms of discrimination by focusing on the experiences of black women in cases of rape and domestic violence. They experienced marginalisation, discrimination, and violence due to the intersections of race and sex rather than because of either race or sex alone. She makes it clear that this does not imply that their experience was a culmination of racial and gender-based discrimination but was distinct.

Crenshaw asserts that using an intersectional perspective to comprehend black women’s experiences would shed light on how race and gender interact and that an intersectional perspective is helpful in “recognising multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.” It enables a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of power in society.

Sandra Fredman notes that although they have slightly different meanings, terms like “multiple discrimination,” “cumulative discrimination,” “compound discrimination,” and “intersectional discrimination” are frequently used interchangeably. The author identifies three different forms of multiple-ground discrimination. The first type is “sequential multiple discrimination,” in which a person may experience discrimination on one ground on one occasion and a different ground on another. A person may experience discrimination on multiple grounds under the second scenario, known as “additive

multiple discrimination.” The third type of discrimination is “synergistic,” which is most prevalent in Crenshaw’s work. In this case, the form of discrimination is “qualitatively different” from the form of discrimination experienced by others who share one of the multiple identity characteristics. This discrimination is intersectional. The purpose of intersectionality, according to Fredman, “should be to capture and address the wrongs experienced by those who are at the confluence of all of these relationships.” As it focuses on (i) the need to redress disadvantage, (ii) the need to address stigma, stereotyping, prejudice, and violence, (iii) the need to facilitate voice and participation, and (iv) the need to accommodate difference and change structures of discrimination, Fredman claims that “structural intersectionality” is a more useful approach.

3.2.4.1 Gender and Intersectionality in the Indian Context

In the Indian context, it is not new to acknowledge that one’s social position and lived multiple identities influence experiences. In India, caste is the main form of oppression and discrimination. We discover that people at the intersections of caste and other identities-such as sex, gender identity, or disability- experience severe forms of discrimination. In Indian society, caste and gender hierarchies are inextricably linked because ‘caste purity’ is upheld by exerting control over women’s bodies. By imposing strict restrictions on women, who are seen as “entry points” or “gateways” of caste mobility for men from lower castes, caste structures are protected. As a result of the police and other authorities’ institutional disregard for their claims, those who exist at the intersection of caste and gender are now especially vulnerable to compound discrimination.



1. Caste

The extreme marginalisation of Dalit women within Indian society, shaped by Brahmanical and patriarchal values, has been noted by prominent Dalit activists and scholars. Sharmila Rege has argued for a “standpoint feminist” strategy to consider Dalit women’s experiences and amplify their voices.

According to Kannabiran and Kannabiran, social spaces are structurally set up so that women from various castes and socioeconomic classes encounter discrimination differently. Furthermore, they contend that rape is the ultimate punishment for a woman who attempts to cross social boundaries because it is always meted out to her when women, especially Dalit women, speak out against the policing by upper caste men. Rege contends that the mainstream feminist movement in India frequently overlooks the ways that caste and gender both restructure how the term “woman” functions as a category in a “graded patriarchy.”

Choosing between community ties and feminism forces Dalit feminists to ignore how caste negatively impacts Dalit women on a structural level. She specifically claims that emphasising the “difference” of caste or the “sameness” of how patriarchy affects all women tends to obscure how caste-based sexual violence is normalised in society. Rege makes the valid point that addressing how caste and gender-based discrimination interact is urgent. Without an intersectional discourse, events like the violence in Khairlanji are often framed as either “sexual assault” or “caste atrocity,” oblivious to the fact that the experience of being raped based on caste and gender. The vulnerability and discrimination that the transgender and intersex communities experience with transgender identity is very noticeable. Caste and gender identity discrimination against

transgender Dalit people is exacerbated. The Dalit and transgender communities, where transgender people frequently find themselves fighting for survival from public violence, lack solidarity, as Semmalar points out. People on the cusp of caste and gender identity frequently have fewer social support options.

Due to their caste status and the Dalit community’s opposition to their gender identity, Dalit transgender people experience severe discrimination from upper caste transgender people. According to Living Smile Vidhya, the actor cum author and veteran Dalit-trans activist, the structure of transphobia is comparable to that of caste hierarchies. Cis-gender people (Cisgender-also styled as cisgendered and often shortened to cis; describes someone whose internal sense of gender corresponds with the sex the person was identified as having at birth) treat her unfairly, much like upper caste Hindus oppress Dalits. Ironically, she is not included by mainstream cis-gender feminists because she is not biologically female. She contends that transgender Dalit women must fight how transphobia, patriarchy, and casteism limit their opportunities and choices in life. She also notes that the transgender community has been “reduced to the status of just beggars or sex workers” in this regard and compares it to Dalits’ “occupational fixity.”

2. Transgender

One of India’s most well-known Dalit transgender activists, Grace Banu, notes that writers frequently ignore cis-Brahmanical patriarchy’s negative and oppressive effects on transgender people. People who identify as transgender must fight for their survival and rights in a patriarchal and caste-based society. Banu attributes the prejudice against transgender people to the Brahmanical patriarchal system, which views begging and sex work as taboo rather than as legitimate

forms of employment. Lastly, she contends that cis-Brahmanical patriarchy is to blame for how ideas of moral “purity” and “pollution” in our society distort socioeconomic power structures to disadvantage Dalit transgender people.

3.2.4.2 Caste and Gender Intersectionality and Social Movements

The non-Brahman movements in Tamil Nadu from the early 20th century onward, the Dalit literary and autobiographical upsurges in Maharashtra in the 1960s, and the ongoing incidents of honour killing and atrocities—all serve as examples of the myriad complex ways that caste, gender, and class intersect to shape the daily conditions of marginalities.

An important social reformer and thinker from India’s 19th century, Jotirao Phule, observed that the rise of Brahmanism and the restriction of women’s freedom were related. He argued that child marriage, forced widowhood, and the sati system were three particular ways the Aryan invasion and its practices brought out gender and caste discrimination. While acknowledging the power imbalances between men and women that led to the marginalisation of the latter, Phule spoke of dual marginalities; however, he saw caste and gender more as parallel categories of marginalities that shaped one’s socio-economic reality. He formed a coalition with the non-Brahman forces known as *Stri-Shudra-Ati-Shudra* (women from lower castes and untouchables) that was crucial in the fight against caste patriarchy, which is sustained by having control over women’s bodies and choices.

Gandhi’s rival movement and the Self-Respect Movement, led by E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar), was an uprising in society and culture against caste, Brahmanism, religion, and the supremacy of men over women.

He shared Phule’s belief that women and members of lower castes were the most oppressed groups in Indian history. For him, the caste system’s foundational social order had to be turned upside down to free them. The Brahmanical order, he claimed, created dual (and not intersectional) marginalisations for women and lower castes. Removing caste privileges and religious beliefs would be part of the Self-Respect movement, which would reshape society to be non-hierarchical.

This trajectory and the ideas of Dr B. R. Ambedkar are consistent. Ambedkar’s understanding of caste and gender identities has two facets. The first acknowledges Dalits and women’s marginalised status in a Brahmanical society, much like Phule and Periyar. In *Who Were the Shudras*, he demonstrates how excluding Dalits and women from Upanayana and other central Hindu rituals gave them the right to be denied property ownership, which had a material impact on their lives. As evidenced by his criticism of endogamy and support for inter-caste marriage, Ambedkar also understood that caste and gender identities were not only parallel but also intersectional systems. He emphasises the significance of endogamous marriages as the means to maintain the sanctity of the caste system by asserting that the “superimposition of endogamy on exogamy means the creation of caste”. It is implicit that caste norms are expressed through gender norms and vice versa.

Anupama Rao criticises Indian feminism for taking a unilinear, normative approach to gender while creating intervention strategies. Women’s material marginalisation cannot be reduced to a single, broad class category. This has caused the power disparity between the castes to persist and become invisible within the women’s movement, reproducing those margins and hierarchies. Caste and class divisions and acceptance of patriarchies and their compensatory structures separate women whose unification is based on the



systematic overlap of patriarchies. To counter this, feminist organisational and combative strategies should “include all social injustices that patriarchies are related to, embedded in, and structured by”.

However, in recent years, the issue of caste and gender intersectionalities has received more attention. This is clear in the evolution of the Dalit feminist perspective as a critique of the *savarnization* of women and the masculinisation of Dalits (and Dalit studies). Such an intersectional perspective recognises the diversity, heterogeneity, and sometimes contradiction present in an individual’s or group’s lived experiences, as well as the ensuing hierarchical, numerous, and shifting power relations of caste, class, race, and ethnicity that shape their social realities. Such an intersectional analysis has recently been used in the context of gender and caste. For instance, Charu Gupta sheds some light on the caste’s previously obscure colonial history in *Gender of Caste*.

She demonstrates how early 20th-century conflicts over Dalit labour, political agency, and social value greatly influenced Indian politics.

The literary works of Dalits have made one of the most significant contributions to the discourse in the modern era. The writing of autobiographies by Dalit women from various parts of the nation, including Urmila Pawar (Marathi), Bama (Tamil), and Kalyani Thakur or Chandalini (Bengali), represents the development of a counter-public based on lived experiences situated through a complex intersection of caste, class, and gender. According to Sharmila Rege, upper-caste women’s autobiographies play a significant role in the feminist discourse of experience by illustrating the tensions between tradition and their desire for the modern. The unique communitarian notion of the Dalit community is disrupted by Dalit *testimonios*, which are life narratives of struggle, oppression, and humiliation.

Recap

- ◆ Gender is a socially constructed concept that shapes the expectations, roles, responsibilities, and behaviors of individuals across all societies.
- ◆ The distinctions between male and female sexes are primarily anatomical and physiological, with “sex” referring to biological differences.
- ◆ Gender equality refers to ensuring that women and men, as well as girls and boys, have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities.
- ◆ Since 2000, the UNDP, in partnership with the UN and the global community, has made gender equality a central focus of its work, leading to significant progress.
- ◆ Gender equality is one of the 17 Global Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- ◆ Human rights legislation, such as the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, upholds the principles of equity and supports affirmative action programs to address and eliminate disadvantages.

- ◆ “Gendering” refers to the social and cultural “packaging” done for boys and girls beginning at birth.
- ◆ According to a global poll by Thomson Reuters, India is the “fourth most dangerous country” for women.
- ◆ The clear message that “Pita, Pati, Putra” (Father, Husband, Son) conveys to young girls is that they must obey their fathers’ orders during their formative years, their husbands’ orders during their marriages, and their sons’ orders during their widowhood.
- ◆ Periyar formed a coalition with the non-Brahman forces known as Stri-Shudra-Anti-Shudra (women from lower castes and untouchables) that was crucial in the fight against caste patriarchy.

Objective Questions

1. What is the concept of women and men, as well as girls and boys, have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities is known as ?
2. Which one included in the 17 goals of 2020 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
3. Which term describes the social and cultural “packaging” done for boys and girls beginning at birth?
4. Which country is ranked as fourth most dangerous country for women?
5. Who coined the term of intersectionality?
6. Who formed the coalition known as *Stri-Shudra-Anti-Shudra*?
7. Who authored *Who Were the Shudras*?
8. Who wrote the book *Gender of Caste*?
9. Who observed the rise of Brahmanism and the restriction of women’s freedom were related in the 19th century?
10. Who led the Self-Respect movement (Suyamariyathai), an uprising in society and culture against caste, Brahmanism, religion, and the supremacy of men over women?

Answers

1. Gender equality
2. Gender equality
3. Gendering
4. India
5. Kimberle Crenshaw
6. E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar)
7. B. R. Ambedkar
8. Charu Gupta
9. Jotirao Phule
10. E. V. Ramasamy (Periyar)

Assignments

1. Define gender and explain the meaning of gender with examples
2. Distinguish between gender and sex and identify major differences
3. Examine intersectionality of caste and gender in Indian context
4. Locate the anti-caste and women empowerment movements in India and elucidate major leaders and their contributions.
5. Define equality and discuss how it differs from social equity
6. Write an essay on gender issues in India regarding intersectionalities of caste, class, and religion.

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BLOCK

Religion & Society



UNIT

Major Religions in India: Features, Changes and the Syncretic Nature

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ identify major world religions and their functional systems
- ◆ examine features, nature and the role of religion in society
- ◆ describe the interconnectedness of world religions in society
- ◆ comprehend the mutual respect of religions among their followers

Prerequisites

You may be aware of various religious festivals such as Onam, Eid, Christmas, etc. Did you think how these festivals are connected with the society? Different people practice different religions and festivals are related to the nature of their practice. Any serious study of the society has to include a study of religion. Study of the society is incomplete without study of religion. Religion has, in fact, interested, fascinated, confused and confounded thinkers from an early period of time.

A society has several important elements such as the family, education, politics, economics, etc. You have already studied social institutions such as family, marriage, etc. Religion is one of the major social institutions. It plays a major role in society. It is part of every known culture because it serves some deep and probably inescapable human need. It affects all the major aspects of life – family, marriage, education, politics, etc. The popular impression about religion is that it is concerned only with the supernatural or the life after the present life on the earth, and has very little to do with the day-to-day life of humans. A closer look will, however, reveal that this popular impression is not wholly correct. Though religion is concerning the supernatural, it has serious implications for the behaviour and welfare of its followers in the society.

It is not merely from a theoretical perspective that we study religion. In our daily life, we live along with members of different religions. In order to facilitate a happy and harmonious living, we need to understand the different religions in our society and respect each other. People of all religions are brothers and sisters, to be accepted, loved and assisted.

Keywords

Sruti and Smriti, Nirvana, Ahimsa, Shahadat, Gospels, Adi Granth

Discussion

We know that the study of blood includes the study of the properties of blood in general and the properties of specific blood groups such as B+, O -, etc. Similarly the study of religion includes the presence and role of religion in general and the religions in the society in particular. So, we shall begin with a few characteristics of religion in general. Even here, religion can be studied from different angles such as sociological, psychological, theological, the economic, etc. We shall limit ourselves to the sociological.

Descriptions and definitions vary with regard to religion because it is a complex reality. There were sociologists such as Max Weber who refrained from any such definition. Religion, the English word, has its root word in Latin language. Two root words have been suggested: *religare* = to bind together, denoting that religion involves a group, and *relegere* = to rehearse, to execute painstakingly indicating the repetitious nature of liturgy.

Sir Edward Burnett Tylor has given a minimum definition of religion as: “belief in spiritual beings.” Emile Durkheim, in his famous book, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, defines religion in terms of

the sacred/profane contrast, but ends with a definition in terms of the general social functionality of religion. Durkheim defines it thus: Religion is “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”

Religion has five sociological characteristics – if these characteristics are present, something is considered as a religion. In order to comprehend easily, we can categorise them all as beginning with the alphabet, C. The characteristics are:

1. Religion implies a group of believers – Community

Although religion can be purely personal, sociologists are concerned with religion as believed and practised by more than one individual. Only then can it become part of culture.

2. Religion is concerned with matters/ thoughts to be sacred - Consecrated

The concept of the sacred or the holy may be applied to human beings, to animals,

to inanimate objects, to abstract ideas and beliefs, to human behaviour patterns, to words, or to anything.

3. Religion involves a specific set of beliefs - Creed.

Religion is characterized by a body of beliefs that provides supernatural and sacred definitions for its followers. It may be simple or complex, logical or contradictory.

4. Religion involves a specific set of practices or rituals – Ceremonies

Rituals are patterns of behaviour toward the sacred and the supernatural.

5. Religion provides moral definitions - Code

Religions provide their members with a set of norms / rules to guide their behaviour.

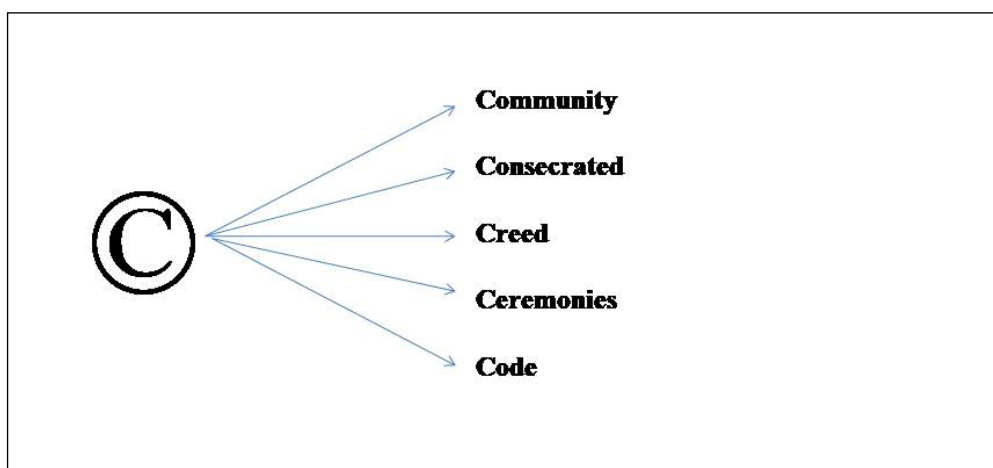


Fig 4.1.1 Characteristics of Religion

About the origin of religions in the world, it is said to be perennial, i.e. right from the beginning of humankind, and universal, i.e. present all over the world. Its shape and form have changed during the course of history, i.e., what one person or a group of people holds as religion may not be accepted as religion as another, but the presence of religion, in whatever form it might have been, is traced back to the early stage of human evolution.

4.1.1 Major Religions in India: Features and Changes

a. Classification of Religions

Religions can be classified according to different criteria. Monotheism or Polytheism is one such criterion. This indicates whether the belief is in one God or more. The

religions generally accepted as monotheistic are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Coming to the religions which originated in India the criterion of acceptance or rejection of the authority of the Vedas is sometimes used. Hinduism admits the authority of the Vedas. Here there are six schools of philosophy / thoughts admitting the Vedic authority. These schools are called as Orthodox – Astika Darsanas. There are three schools rejecting the authority of the Vedas – Nastika Darsanas. They are Carvaka, Jainism and Buddhism.

b. The Rationale for Multiple Religions

Every human being is unique. His or her nature and nurture, heredity and environment are different. The family, the education, the peer and the media – all these affect the religion. Individuals and their aptitudes are

diverse, and so everything does not benefit or convince everybody. All persons are not fit for all things. Plurality of religions can be understood from this perspective also.

In this context, it is good for us to be aware of the distribution of Indian population

according to the religions. In such matters, the most cited source is the census of India. The latest available census data of 2011 is given below:

Religion	Percent	Estimated
All Religion	100.00 %	121 Crores
Hindu	79.80 %	96.62 Crores
Muslim	14.23 %	17.22 Crores
Christian	2.30 %	2.78 Crores
Sikh	1.72 %	2.08 Crores
Buddhist	0.70 %	84.43 Lakhs
Jain	0.37 %	44.52 Lakhs
Other Religion	0.66 %	79.38 Lakhs
Not Stated	0.24 %	28.67 Lakhs

Table 4.1.1 All India Religion Census Data 2011

c. Method of Discussions

We shall now study one by one the world religions. Our discussions here cannot be very elaborate due to the limitations of time and space. However, we shall take a look at the origin, the expansion, the numerical strength, the sacred texts and the social aspects of each religion.

4.1.1.1 Hinduism

We shall begin the study of world religions with Hinduism. It is one of the oldest world religions. Most scholars believe that Hinduism started between 2300 B.C. and 1500 B.C. in the Indus Valley, near modern-day Pakistan. But there are Hindus who argue that their faith is timeless and has always existed (Sanātana Dharma). Unlike other religions, Hinduism is a fusion of various beliefs / distinctive manifestations, and so there is no *one* founder.

It is estimated that Hinduism has about 1.16 billion adherents, constituting 15.16% of the world population. India is the largest centre of Hindu religion even to this day as 79.8% of Indian population is Hindu.

a) The Sacred Texts: The sruti Literature

The oldest and the sacred texts of Hinduism are the Vedas, meaning knowledge. They are derived from the ancient Indo-Aryan culture. They began as an oral tradition that was passed down through generations before finally being written in Vedic Sanskrit between 1500 and 500 BCE (Before Common Era). They are chiefly divided into sruti and smṛti.

Sruti, etymologically from sru (to hear), is believed to have been revealed by the Almighty. They are a collection (samhita) of poems or hymns, used by different categories of priests during the sacred rites, to praise gods. Some of these gods were personified natural and cosmic phenomena, such as fire

(Agni), the Sun (Surya and Savitri), dawn (Ushas, a goddess), storms (the Rudras), and rain (Indra), while others represented abstract qualities such as friendship (Mitra), moral authority (Varuna), kingship (Indra), and speech (Vach, a goddess).

There are four Vedas: the foremost collection of such poems, from which the hotri (“reciter”) drew the material for his recitations, is the Rigveda (“Knowledge of the Verses”). The sacred formulas known as mantras and recited by the adhvaryu, the priest responsible for the sacrificial fire and for carrying out the ceremonies came to be known as the Yajurveda (“Knowledge of the Sacrifice”). A third group of priests, headed by the udgatri (“chanter”), performed melodic recitations linked to verses that were drawn almost entirely from the Rigveda but were arranged as a separate Samhita, is the Samaveda (“Knowledge of the Chants”). Those three Vedas - Rig, Yajur, and Sama - were known as the trayi-vidya (threefold knowledge). A fourth collection of hymns, magic spells, and incantations is known as the Atharvaveda (“Knowledge of the Fire Priest”), which includes various local traditions and remains partly outside the Vedic sacrifice.

The entire corpus of Vedic literature - the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads - is considered sruti (“What is Heard”), the product of divine revelation. Among these, the Upanishads enjoy the pride of place. The Sanskrit term Upaniṣhad (from upa “by” and ni-Sad “sit down”) translates to “sitting down near”, referring to the student sitting down near the teacher while receiving spiritual knowledge. Spread over the four Vedas, there are about 108 known Upanishads out of which about ten are considered important.

b) The Smṛti Literature

The word smṛti etymologically comes from smr (to remember). It refers to what

is remembered, contrasted with what is heard or revealed (sruti). The smṛti literature elaborates, interprets, and codifies the Vedic thought but, being derived from the sruti, they are considered less authoritative. The smṛti is of human origin and were written to explain the Śruti writings and to make them understandable and meaningful to the general population. It is remarkable that every aspect of knowledge is listed in smṛti literature.

The smṛti literature is a body of diverse varied texts. This corpus includes (i) *the Upavedas* - a category of knowledge (art or science) regarded as supplementary to the Veda: Ayurveda (medicine), Gandharvaveda (music and dancing), Dhanurveda (archery), and Arthashastra (economics, politics and military), and for some, Śilpaśāstra (architecture). (ii) Vedangas (literally mean the limbs of the Vedas) performing various supportive and augmenting functions in the study, preservation and protection of the Vedas and the vedic traditions. The six Vedangas are Siksha (pronunciation), Chanda (rhyme and meter), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (dictionary), Jyotisha (astronomy) and Kalpa (ethical precepts) (iii) the Puranas (epics): the Mahabharata and the Ramayana), the Dharmasūtras and Dharmaśāstras, the Arthashastras, the Puranas, the Kavya or poetical literature, extensive Bhasyas (reviews and commentaries on Shrutis and non-Shruti texts), and numerous Nibandhas (digests) covering politics, ethics (Nitisāstras), culture, arts and society.

c) The Caste System

India’s caste system is among the world’s oldest forms of surviving social stratification. The system divides the Hindus into inherited hierarchical groups based on their birth .

The caste system divides Hindus into four main categories - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras. Many believe that the groups originated from Brahma,



the Hindu God of creation. At the top of the hierarchy were the Brahmins who were mainly teachers and intellectuals and are believed to have come from Brahma's head. Then came the Kshatriyas, or the warriors and rulers, supposedly from his arms. The third slot went to the Vaishyas, or the traders, who were created from his thighs. At the bottom of the pyramid were the Shudras, who came from Brahma's feet and did all the menial jobs. The main castes were further divided into about 3,000 castes and 25,000 sub-castes, each based on their specific occupation. Outside of this Hindu caste system were the achhoots - the Dalits or the untouchables.

The *Manusmriti*, widely regarded to be the most authoritative book on Hindu code acknowledges and justifies the caste system as the basis of order and regularity of society. For centuries, the caste has dictated almost every aspect of Hindu religious and social life, with each group occupying a specific place in this complex hierarchy.

d) Asrama Dharma

Ashrama, also spelled asrama, Sanskrit *āśrama*, in Hinduism, refers to any of the four stages of life through which a Hindu ideally will pass. The life span of a human being is divided into four stages: (1) the student (*brahmachari*), marked by chastity, devotion, and obedience to one's teacher, (2) the householder (*grahastha*), requiring marriage, the begetting of children, sustaining one's family and helping support priests and holy men, and fulfilment of duties toward gods and ancestors, (3) the forest dweller (*vanaprastha*), beginning after the birth of grandchildren and consisting of withdrawal from concern with material things, pursuit of solitude, and ascetic and yogic practices, and (4) the homeless renouncer (*sannyasi*), involving renouncing all one's possessions to wander from place to place begging for food.

e) Darsanas

Indian Philosophy refers to several traditions of philosophical thought that originated in the Indian subcontinent. Philosophy arose in India as an enquiry into the mystery of life and existence. Over centuries, India's intellectual exploration of truth has come to be represented by six systems of philosophy. These are known as Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimamsa. These six systems of philosophy are called the Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy and Theology as they accept the authority of the Vedas. The six systems of philosophy were developed over many generations with contributions made by individual thinkers. However, today, we find an underlying harmony in their understanding of truth, although they seem distinct from each other.

4.1.1.2 Islam

Islam is the name of the religion that the Muslims follow. The literal meaning of Islam is submission to the will of Allah (in Arabic, *Allāh*: The God), made known through the sacred scriptures, the Quran, which Allah revealed to his messenger, Muhammad, the Prophet. The Arabic letters s-l-m is the root of the word Islam and the word peace (*salam*). The term Islam itself does not mean peace, but it implies that one finds peace (*salam*) through submission (*islam*). Islam is named after the action of submitting to God's commands and will and not a person. Other religions are often named after a person or people: Christianity is named after Christ, Judaism after the tribe of Juda, Buddhism after Buddha. Islam is not named after Muhammad because Islam existed before him. It started with Adam, the first prophet and continues until today. With the passing of time, God sends new prophets and messengers to remind humankind of His message, to worship Him alone. Muhammad (570-632 BCE), is the last

of these Prophets. Islam is an Abrahamic religion and like Judaism and Christianity, it honours Abraham as the patriarch. Islam reveres Jesus ('Isa) as a holy prophet and his mother Mary (Mariam) as a holy woman.

Islam, which is practiced by more than 1.91 billion people, ie., 25% of the global population, is the second largest religion. But it is considered as the fastest-growing major religion.

a) The Quran

The Quran is the holy book of Islam. It was revealed verbally to the Prophet Muhammed from the God through the angel Gabriel gradually over a period of 23 years; beginning in 609 CE and ending in 632 CE. Its content is the actual words of Allah as received and preached by Muhammad the Prophet.

The Quran is divided into 114 chapters of different topics and lengths, known as *Surah*. Each surah is made up of verses, known as *Ayat* (or ayah). The shortest surah is Al-Kawthar, made up of only three verses; the longest is Al-Baqarah, with 286 verses. The chapters are classified as Meccan or Medinan, based on whether they were revealed before Muhammad's exodus to Medina (Makkiyya), or afterward (Madaniyya). The 28 Madaniyya chapters are mainly concerned with the social life and growth of the Muslim community; the 86 Makkiyya chapters deal with faith and the afterlife.

The Quran is also divided into 30 sections, or *Juz'*. These sections are organized so that the reader can study the Quran over the course of a month. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims are recommended to complete at least one full reading of the Quran from cover to cover. The *Juz'* system serve as a guide to accomplish that task.

The themes of the Quran are interwoven throughout the chapters, rather than presented in chronological or thematic order. Readers

may utilize a concordance—an index that lists each usage of every word in the Quran—to look for particular themes or topics.

The Arabic text of the original Arabic Quran is identical and unchanged since its revelation in the 7th century C.E. About 90 percent of Muslims around the world do not speak Arabic as a native tongue, and there are many translations of the Quran available in English and other languages. However, for reciting prayers and reading chapters and verses in the Quran, Muslims do use Arabic to participate as part of their shared faith.

Shariah is the Islamic law derived from the words of Prophet Muhammad, called "Hadith," his actions, called "Sunnah," and the Quran, which he presented dictated. Apart from Quran and Hadith, the Ijama (The general consensus of opinion among the companions of the Prophet or the learned scholars) and Qiyas (the method of analogical reasoning to derive legal principles from Quran and Sunnah) are considered as the third and fourth sources of Shariah laws. The Sharia law itself cannot be altered but its interpretation, called "fiqh," by muftis (Islamic jurists) is given some authority. It is not a list of rules but rather a set of principles on spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of life that must be followed by Muslims. It categorizes all man's acts into five distinct categories: obligatory, recommended, permitted, discouraged, and forbidden. The basic articles of Islamic faith are: (a) belief in the oneness of Allah, (b) belief in the prophets and in the guidance that they bequeathed, (c) belief in the angels, (d) belief in the Holy books, (e) belief in the Day of Judgment, and (f) belief in fate. Whoever professes these beliefs is a Muslim. And all of these concepts are epitomized in the *kalimah shahada* (bearing witness to the faith): There is no God but Allah; Muhammad is His messenger. The major tenets of Islam are known as the five pillars of Islam. They are:



1. The Declaration of Faith—The Shahada

The declaration of Faith, the *shahada*, is the most fundamental expression of Islamic beliefs. It simply states that “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger.” It underscores the monotheistic nature of Islam.

2. Daily Prayers—Salat

Muslims are expected to pray five times a day. This does not mean that they need to attend a mosque to pray; rather, the *salat*, or the daily prayer, should be performed five times a day. The five daily prayers include: *Fajr* (sunrise prayer), *Dhuhr* (noon prayer), *Asr* (afternoon prayer), *Maghrib* (sunset prayer), and *Isha* (night prayer). Each prayer has a specific window of time in which it must be completed. Muslims can pray anywhere; however, they are meant to face towards Mecca. The faithful pray by bowing several times while standing and then kneeling and touching the ground or prayer mat with their foreheads, as a symbol of their reverence and submission to Allah. Friday prayer is significant for Muslims; they need to attend a mosque near midday to pray and to listen to a sermon, *khutba*.

3. Almsgiving—The Zakat

The giving of alms is the third pillar. Although not defined in the Qu'ran, Muslims believe that they are meant to share their wealth with those less fortunate in their community of believers.

4. Fasting during Ramadan—The Saum

During the holy month of *Ramadan*, the ninth month in the Islamic calendar, Muslims are expected to fast from dawn to dusk. While there are exceptions made for the sick, elderly, and pregnant, all are expected to refrain from eating and drinking during daylight hours.

5. Pilgrimage to Mecca—The Hajj

All Muslims who are able physically, economically and healthy are required to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and the surrounding holy sites at least once in their lives. Pilgrimage occurs in the 12th month of the Islamic Calendar.

b) Muslim Holy Days

There are only two Muslim festivals set down in Islamic law: Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha. Eid or Id is a word meaning festival. Eid ul-Fitr (Arabic: “Festival of Breaking Fast”) marks the end of Ramadan and lasts for one day. It is a celebration of Allah giving the strength to get through the Ramadan fast. Ramadan is a time for Muslims to strengthen their bond with Allah, recite the Quran and exercise great will power. As a reward, Eid ul-Fitr is celebrated. Eid ul Adha or Bakrid is the festival of sacrifice. The festival remembers the Prophet Ibrahim’s willingness to sacrifice his son when the God ordered him to. God appeared in a dream to Prophet Ibrahim and told him to sacrifice his son Ismail. Prophet Ibrahim and Ismail set off to Mina for the sacrifice. As they went, the devil attempted to persuade Ibrahim to disobey God and not to sacrifice his beloved son. But Prophet Ibrahim stayed true to God, and drove the devil away. As Prophet Ibrahim prepared to sacrifice his son, the God stopped him and gave him a sheep to sacrifice instead. Thus, Eid ul Adha is celebrated in accordance with Hajj at Mecca. Remembering Prophet Ibrahim’s legacy, Bakrid sacrifice (animals such as goat, sheep etc.) also known as Qurbani is encouraged for those who are able to do so.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and the holy month of fasting. It begins and ends with the appearance of the crescent moon. Because the Muslim calendar (Hijri) year is shorter than the Gregorian calendar year, Ramadan begins 10–12



days earlier each year, allowing it to fall in every season throughout a 33-year cycle. Islamic tradition states that it was during Ramadan, on the “Night of Power” (Laylat al-Qadr) - commemorated on one of the last 10 nights of Ramadan, usually the 27th night - that God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad the Quran, Islam’s holy book, “as a guidance for the people.” For Muslims, Ramadan is a period of introspection, communal prayer (ṣalat) in the mosque, and reading of the Quran. God forgives the past sins of those who observe the holy month with fasting, prayer, and faithful intention.

4.1.1.3 Christianity

Christianity originated with the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Etymologically the name *Jesus* means saviour and *Christ* means the Anointed One of God. He was a Jewish teacher and healer who in Jerusalem in the Roman Province of Judea proclaimed the Kingdom of God. He healed the sick and forgave sinners. He was crucified around AD 30–33, but it is believed that he rose from the dead on the third day. The followers of Jesus Christ are called Christians.

Christianity is a monotheistic religion, believing in one God who created the whole universe. It is the continuation and fulfilment of Judaism, the religion of the Jesus. The Christians believe Jesus to be Son of God who in fulfilment of the prophecies became fully human being in order to liberate humankind from sin.

Christianity is the largest of the world’s religions and, geographically, the most widely spread of all faiths. Its membership is about 2.383 billion, i.e., 31.11% of the world population. It has many branches or denominations due to differences in understanding and living the teachings of Jesus. Its largest groups are the Roman Catholic

Church, the Eastern Orthodox churches, and the Protestant churches. There is an estimated 1.2 billion Roman Catholics in the world with the Pope as their head.

The Bible is the sacred book of Christianity. The word bible originally comes from the Greek, *biblion* literally meaning “paper, scroll,” and the word is used for “a book as a division of a larger work.” It has two parts called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The former, which is also sacred to the Jews, begins with the account of creation and elaborates the story of Judaism. There is disagreement about the number of books in the Bible. The Catholic Church recognizes 73 books consisting of 46 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. Four of the books of the New Testament that recount the life and teachings of Jesus are called the Gospels, meaning Good News, wherein four followers of Jesus, namely, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John recount the life and teachings of Jesus. The Bible is considered a library in miniature, as its books are of different types including stories, songs, poetry, letters, and history. The Bible is considered to be divine in origin, i.e., revealed by God, but come about through different composers in different languages over a period of more than 1500 years in different places. It began as oral tradition and was later put to writing.

The major Christian holy days are Christmas (celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ), Good Friday (commemorating the crucifixion of Jesus), and Easter (celebrating the resurrection of Jesus). Sunday is regarded as the holy day of the week in most Christian traditions. The most important prayer or worship service in many denominations is known as the Mass (in Catholic and some other traditions) or the Eucharist. It is a commemoration of the Last Supper, the final meal that Jesus shared with his apostles before his arrest and crucifixion.



In the Catholic Church, the Mass is presided over by a priest, bishop, or higher-ranking clergy. Other Christian denominations also have similar services, sometimes referred to as Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. There are many other rites and rituals, both major and minor, that vary across different Christian traditions.

Christianity is believed to have reached India soon after the crucifixion of Jesus. The history of Indian Christianity begins in 52 A.D. when St. Thomas is believed to have landed at Kodungallur on the Malabar Coast of Kerala. Ever since there have been several Christian expeditions to India, some of them as part of business / trade teams. It was in Kerala that it took root. They were actively involved in educational and social fields of the country. Being actively involved in educational and social fields in the country, they made vigorous attempts in a systematic manner for the propagation of Christian teachings and in religious conversion. The Catholic Church in India is composed of three individual Churches - Latin, Malabar and Malankara. All these Christian communities differ in language, social customs and economic status. Despite the waves of missionaries to India under colonial rule, the number of Christians in India remains small, especially in comparison to the total Indian population.

4.1.1.4 Sikhism

Sikhism was founded in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent in the late 15th century. Its members are known as Sikhs. The Sikhs call their faith Gurmat (Punjabi: "the Way of the Guru"). According to the Sikh tradition, Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and subsequently led by a succession of nine other Gurus. All those 10 human Gurus, Sikhs believe, were inhabited by a single spirit. After the death of the 10th Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the spirit of the eternal Guru transferred itself to the

sacred scripture of Sikhism, *Guru Granth Sahib* ("The Granth as the Guru"), also known as the *Adi Granth* ("First Volume"), which thereafter was regarded as the sole Guru. In the early 21st century there were nearly 25 million Sikhs worldwide, the great majority of them living in the Indian state of Punjab.

Sikh in Punjabi means "learner," and those who joined the Sikh community, or Panth ("Path"), were people who sought spiritual guidance. Sikhs claim that their tradition has always been separate from Hinduism. But some Western scholars point out that in its earliest stage Sikhism was a movement within the Hindu tradition. They argue that Nanak was raised a Hindu and eventually belonged to the Sant tradition of Northern India which drew heavily from the Vaishnava bhakti that worships the God Vishnu. But it is to be borne in mind that unlike the followers of bhakti, the Sants maintained that God is *nirgun* ("without form") and not *sagun* ("with form").

There are five articles of Sikh faith (Kakar). They are Kachhera - Loose undergarment, Kanga - Wooden comb, Kara - Iron Bangle, Kes - Unshorn hair and Kirpan - Ceremonial short sword.

a. The Worship Service

A Sikh gurdwara includes both the house of worship proper and its associated *langar*, or communal refectory. All those attending the worship service must enter with heads covered and feet bare and show respect to the *Adi Granth* by bowing their foreheads to the floor before the sacred scripture. Worship consists largely of singing hymns from the scripture, and every service concludes with Ardas, a set prayer that is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a declaration of the virtues of all the Gurus, and the last part is a brief salutation to the divine name; neither part can be changed. The middle part of the Ardas is a list, in a generally agreed form, of the trials and the

triumphs of the Khalsa, which are recited in clusters by a prayer leader. The congregation responds to each cluster with a fervent “Vahiguru,” which originally meant “Praise to the Guru” but is now accepted as the most common word for God. The conclusion of the service is followed by the distribution of karah prasad, a sacramental food that consists of equal parts of coarsely refined wheat flour, clarified butter, and raw sugar.

b. The Rejection of Caste

The *Adi Granth* contains a forthright condemnation of caste, and consequently there is no toleration of caste in its presence (normally in a gurdwara). The caste is not important whatsoever for access to liberation. So, in the langar, everyone must sit in a straight line, neither ahead to lay claim to higher status nor behind to denote inferiority. Another sign of the Sikhs’ rejection of caste is the distribution of the karah prasad, which is prepared or donated by people of all castes.

However, there are two areas of Sikh society where caste is still observed. The first is in marrying within one’s own caste: Jat marries Jat, Khatri marries Khatri, and Dalit marries Dalit. At times gurdwaras intended for a particular caste are also found established.

More than 60 percent of Sikhs belong to the Jat caste, which is a rural caste. The Khatri and Arora castes, both mercantile castes, form a very small minority, but influential within the Sikh community. Other castes represented among the Sikhs, in addition to the distinctive Sikh caste of Ramgarhias (artisans), are the Ahluwalias (formerly Kalals [brewers] who have raised their status considerably) and the two Dalit castes, known in Sikh terminology as the Mazhabis (the Chuhars) and the Ramdalias (the Chamars).

c. Rites and Festivals

Sikh Rahat Maryada, the manual that specifies the duties of Sikhs, names four rituals that qualify as rites of passage. The first is a birth and naming ceremony, held in a *gurdwara* when the mother is able to rise and bathe after giving birth. A hymn is selected at random from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and a name beginning with the first letter of the hymn is chosen. Singh is added to the names of males and Kaur to females. A second rite is the anand karaj (“blissful union”), or marriage ceremony, which clearly distinguishes Sikhs from Hindus. The bride and groom are required to circle four times around the *Guru Granth Sahib* to the singing of Guru Ram Das’s Suhi Chhant. The third rite—regarded as the most important—is the amrit sanskar, the ceremony for initiation into the Khalsa. The fourth rite is the funeral ceremony. In all cases the distinction between Sikhs and Hindus is emphasized.

d. Sikh Literature: The Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth

There are two books that stand out above all others in the Sikh religion: the *Adi Granth* (“First Book”) - unquestionably the greater of the two - and the *Dasam Granth* (“Tenth Book”). The *Adi Granth* is believed by Sikhs to be the abode of the eternal Guru, and for that reason it is known to all Sikhs as the *Guru Granth Sahib* - in full, the *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahibji* (“The Most Revered Granth Which is the Guru”). It is divided into three parts and organized in accordance with specific ragas, a series of five or more notes upon which a melody is based. The *Dasam Granth* is controversial as there is uncertainty regarding its authorship and composition. It is believed to be a work of Guru Gobind Singh. The Golden Temple in Amritsar (Sri Harimandir Sahib) is not only a central religious place of the Sikhs, but also a symbol of human brotherhood and

equality. It was built between 1577 and 1604.

The Sikhs understand their religion as the product of five pivotal events. The first was the teaching of Guru Nanak: his message of liberation through meditation on the divine name. The second was the arming of the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind. The third was Guru Gobind Singh's founding of the Khalsa, its distinctive code to be observed by all who were initiated. At his death came the fourth event, the passing of the mystical Guru from its 10 human bearers to the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The final event took place early in the 20th century, when Sikhism underwent a profound reformation at the hands of the Tat Khalsa. Sikhs are universally proud of their distinct faith.

4.1.1.5 Jainism

Along with Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism are two ancient Indian religious traditions. These two, along with Charvaka, do not accept the prominence of Vedic literature. So, these three are called Nastika - Heterodox (opposite of Orthodox). While often employing concepts shared with Hinduism and Buddhism, the result of a common cultural and linguistic background, the Jain tradition must be regarded as an independent phenomenon rather than as a Hindu sect or a Buddhist heresy.

The word Jainism is derived from the Sanskrit verb *ji* meaning "to conquer." 'Jina' means conqueror - a person who has conquered one's passions, desires and karmas. The Jain tradition's monastic and lay adherents are called Jain ("Follower of the Conquerors"), or Jaina. Jainism enlists 24 teachers, known as Thirthankaras, through whom their faith has come down from ancient times. Vardhamana Mahavira, the last and the most illustrious of the 24, lived in 6th century BC, contemporary of the Buddha, and gave a new orientation to Jainism and so is called as its founder.

Mahavira, like the Buddha, was the son of a chieftain of the Kshatriya (warrior) class. At age 30, he renounced his princely status to take up the ascetic life. Mahavira spent the next 12½ years following a path of solitary and intense asceticism. He then converted 11 disciples (called ganadharas), all of whom were originally Brahmans. Two of these disciples, Indrabhuti Gautama and Sudharman, both of whom survived Mahavira, are regarded as the founders of the historical Jain monastic community, and a third, Jambu, is believed to be the last person of the current age to gain enlightenment. Mahavira is believed to have died at Pavapuri, near modern Patna.

The three main pillars of Jainism are ahimsa (non-violence), anekantavada (non-absolutism), and aparigraha (non-attachment). According to the Jain tradition, it numbered 14,000 monks and 36,000 nuns at the time of Mahavira's death. Jainism, like the orthodox systems, agreed with aspiring for a cessation of suffering through techniques of mental control and in seeking right knowledge, right perception and right conduct. It does not believe in God, but they adore the 24 Thirthankaras who liberated themselves through their own efforts.

In course of time, as the numbers increased, the followers of Jainism were divided into two sects, Svetambaras (white-robed) who argue that monks and nuns should wear white robes and the Digambaras (sky-clad: naked) who assert that a true monk (but not a nun) should be naked. The latter are stricter and more rigorous while the former are more relaxed with regard to practices and hold that women also can obtain liberation.

Jainism has vast amount of literature. But the most authoritative are those by Mahavira. One of the basic tenets of Jainism is that every living being has a soul (Jiva). So, nonviolence (ahimsa, literally "non-injury") to all living creatures is fundamental to Jainism.

Every object has innumerable characteristics. The ordinary human being has limited vision and views. So, his / her knowledge is partial knowledge (naya), which is true but only from one or another perspective. So, there should be mutual respect for other approaches. Syadvada denotes this doctrine of relativism upheld by Jainism. Jainism has been confined largely to India, although the recent migration of Indians to other, predominantly English-speaking countries has spread its practice to many Commonwealth nations and to the United States.

Jainism spread westward to Ujjain, where it apparently enjoyed royal patronage. Later, in the 1st century BCE, according to tradition, a monk named Kalakacharya apparently overthrew King Gardabhilla of Ujjain and arranged his replacement with the Shahi kings (who were probably of Scythian or Persian origin). During the reign of the Gupta dynasty (320–c. 600 CE), a time of Hindu self-assertion, the bulk of the Jain community migrated to central and western India, becoming stronger there than it had been in its original home in the Ganges basin.

There is archaeological evidence of the presence of Jain monks in southern India from before the Common Era, and the Digambara sect has had a significant presence in Karnataka for almost 2,000 years. The early medieval period was the time of Digambara Jainism's greatest flowering. Enjoying success in modern-day Karnataka and in neighbouring Tamil Nadu state, the Digambaras gained the patronage of prominent monarchs of three major dynasties in the early medieval period -the Gangas in Karnataka (3rd - 11th century); the Rashtrakutas, whose kingdom was just north of the Ganga realm (8th – 12th century); and the Hoysalas in Karnataka (11th – 14th century). Digambara monks are reputed to have engineered the succession of the Ganga and the Hoysala dynasties,

thus stabilized uncertain political situations and guaranteed Jain political protection and support. The Digambaras' involvement in politics allowed Jainism to prosper in Karnataka and the Deccan. Many political and aristocratic figures had Jain monks as spiritual teachers and advisers.

4.1.1.6 Buddhism

Buddhism is developed from the teachings of the Buddha, the name meaning the Awakened One. Buddha whose original name was Siddhartha was born in a royal family of Kapilavastu at the foot of the Himalayas. His family name was Gautama in Sanskrit or Gotama in Pali, and he was named Siddhartha Sanskrit: “he who achieves his aim” or Siddhattha in Pali. It has been calculated that he was born around c. 563 BCE or 480 BCE. His life is known largely through legends. When he realized the impermanence of all earthly things at the sight of an old man, a sick man and a dead man, he left everything and became a mendicant. He sought advice from many religious teachers and learned scholars of the time and practiced extreme asceticism, but to no avail. Later he himself became enlightened through meditation under a tree. He travelled over forty-five years and preached his doctrine of enlightenment, and died about the age of eighty. His body was then cremated and the relics distributed and enshrined in stupas (funerary monuments that usually contained relics), where they would be venerated.

Buddhism came about during a period of great social change and intense religious activity. At this time in India, there was widespread discontent with Brahmanic sacrificial rites and rituals. Religiously, this was a time of doubt, turmoil, and experimentation. Spreading from India to Central and Southeast Asia, China, Korea, and Japan, Buddhism played a central role in the spiritual, cultural, and social life of



Asia, and, from beginning of the 20th century, it spread to the West. The ancient Buddhist scripture and doctrine developed in several closely related literary languages of ancient India, especially in Pali and Sanskrit.

a) Branches of Buddhism

In the centuries following the founder's death, Buddhism developed in two directions represented by two different groups. One was called the Hinayana (Sanskrit: "Lesser Vehicle"), a term given to it by its Buddhist opponents. This more conservative group, which included what is now called the *Theravada* (Pali: "Way of the Elders") community, compiled versions of the Buddha's teachings that had been preserved in collections called the *Sutta Pitaka* and the *Vinaya Pitaka* and retained them as normative. The other major group, which calls itself the Mahayana (Sanskrit: "Greater Vehicle"), considers Gautama Buddha to be a divine being who helps his followers to attain nirvana. During the second half of the 1st millennium CE, a third major Buddhist movement, Vajrayana (Sanskrit: "Diamond Vehicle"; also called Tantric, or Esoteric, Buddhism), developed in India. This movement was influenced by Gnostic and magical currents pervasive at that time; its aim was to obtain spiritual liberation and purity more speedily.

Despite these divisions, Buddhism did not abandon its basic principles. Instead, they were reinterpreted, rethought, and reformulated in a process that led to the creation of a great body of literature. This literature includes the Pali: *Tipitaka* ("Three Baskets") - the *Sutta Pitaka* ("Basket of Discourse"), which contains the Buddha's sermons; the *Vinaya Pitaka* ("Basket of Discipline"), which contains the rule governing the monastic order; and the *Abhidhamma Pitaka* ("Basket of Special Doctrine"), which contains doctrinal systematizations and summaries. These Pali

texts have served as the basis for a long and very rich tradition of commentaries that were written and preserved by adherents of the Theravada community.

b) Buddhist Philosophy

Buddha must be viewed within the context of Buddhist theories of time and history. Among these theories is the belief that the universe is the product of karma, the law of the cause and effect of actions. The beings of the universe are reborn without beginning in six realms as gods, demigods, humans, animals, ghosts, and hell beings. The cycle of rebirth, called *samsara* (literally "wandering"), is regarded as a domain of suffering, and the Buddhist's ultimate goal is to escape from that suffering. The means of escape remains unknown until, over the course of millions of lifetimes, a person perfects himself, ultimately gaining the power to discover the path out of *samsara* and then revealing that path to the world.

A person who has set out to discover the path to freedom from suffering and then to teach it to others is called a bodhisattva. A person who has discovered that path, followed it to its end, and taught it to the world is called a buddha. The buddhas are not reborn after they die but enter a state beyond suffering called nirvana (literally "passing away"). Since the buddhas appear so rarely over the course of time and because only they reveal the path to liberation from suffering, the appearance of a buddha in the world is considered a momentous event.

The story of a particular buddha begins before his birth and extends beyond his death. It encompasses the millions of lives spent on the path toward enlightenment and buddhahood and the persistence of the buddha through his teachings and his relics after he has passed into nirvana. The historical buddha is regarded as neither the first nor the last buddha to appear in the

world. According to some traditions he is the 7th buddha, according to another he is the 25th, and according to yet another he is the 4th. The next buddha, Maitreya, will appear after Shakyamuni's teachings and relics have disappeared from the world.

Places associated with the Buddha's life became important pilgrimage places, and regions that Buddhism entered long after his death - such as Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Burma (now Myanmar) - added narratives of his magical visitations to accounts of his life. Although the Buddha did not leave any written works, various versions of his teachings were preserved orally by his disciples. In the centuries following his death, hundreds of texts (called sutras) were attributed to him and would subsequently be translated into the languages of Asia.

c) The Buddha's Message

The Buddha was not a metaphysician. For him the most urgent problem of man was to end suffering. The first pre-occupation of the human beings should be to terminate misery, not to waste time in useless discussions. Suffering is the ultimately dissatisfying character of human life. Existence is painful. Living amid the impermanence of impermanent everything, human beings search for the way of deliverance and the Buddha arrived at it through enlightenment. The Buddha's doctrine offered a path to avoid despair.

The belief in rebirth, or samsara, as a potentially endless series of worldly existences in which every being is caught up was already associated with the doctrine of Karma (Sanskrit: karman; literally "act" or "deed") in pre-Buddhist India, and it was accepted by virtually all Buddhist traditions. According to the doctrine, good conduct brings a pleasant and happy result and creates a tendency toward similar good acts, while bad conduct brings an evil result and creates

a tendency toward similar evil acts.

Awareness of the fundamental realities led the Buddha to formulate the Four Noble Truths: (1) life is full of misery and pain (dukkha; literally "suffering" but connoting "uneasiness" or "dissatisfaction"); (2) the misery has a cause. Here comes the law of dependent origination (pratitya-samudpada) which holds that one condition arises out of another, which in turn arises out of prior conditions. Every mode of being presupposes another immediately preceding mode from which the subsequent mode derives, in a chain of causes. The 12 links in the chain are: ignorance (avijja), karmic predispositions (sankharas), consciousness (vinnana), form and body (nama-rupa), the five sense organs and the mind (salayatana), contact (phassa), feeling-response (vedana), craving (tanha), grasping for an object (upadana), action toward life (bhava), birth (jati), and old age and death (jaramarana). In the final analysis, ignorance is the cause of suffering;

(3) There is a cessation of suffering (dukkha nirodha), called as Nirvana (blowing out or cooling), extinction of all false desire. The aim of Buddhist practice is to be rid of the delusion of ego and thus free oneself from the fetters of this mundane world. One who is successful in doing so is said to have overcome the round of rebirths and to have achieved enlightenment. This is the final goal in most Buddhist traditions.

(4) Elimination of suffering is achieved by following a methodical path, known as the Noble Eightfold Path (Aṣṭaṅgika Marga). This path consists of:

1. Right View (understanding the Four Noble Truths)
2. Right Intention (cultivating wholesome aspirations)
3. Right Speech (speaking truthfully and kindly)



4. Right Action (practicing ethical conduct)
5. Right Livelihood (engaging in a moral and non-harmful occupation)
6. Right Effort (developing positive mental states)
7. Right Mindfulness (maintaining awareness and presence)
8. Right Concentration (attaining deep meditative absorption)

This Eightfold Path is the fundamental practice in Buddhism, leading to the cessation of suffering (Nirvana).

d) Buddhist Social Structure

The Buddhist monks are the highest group in the social hierarchy of Buddhism. They are the most respected and valued in the community. They usually live together in Buddhist monasteries where time is spent in teaching, meditation and chanting prayers in the monastery. The Buddhist monasteries are learning centres of the religion and most Buddhist children go there to study about the religion. A monastery is usually inclusive of school rooms, prayer halls, crematorium, library and dormitories. It is run by donations, support from local community and money gained from ceremonies. It is open to public and common people can stay there for a limited period of time. The monks there teach about Buddha's principles and the religion as a whole.

The next category in the Buddhist social hierarchy is the nuns who are usually the assistants to the monks. Women can also become nuns and they handle the less responsible jobs in the monastery. They are generally involved in meditation and prayers most of the time.

The Buddhist lay people provide the monks all their necessary things for their daily

life including food, shelter and medicines. They are really generous to take care of each and every requirement of the monks and in return the monks teach them about Buddhist religion. The lay people spend their time in earning their living occupied in a variety of professions like any other community.

4.1.2 Syncretic Nature of Religions

Syncretism is the combining of different beliefs and various schools of thought. It is the amalgamation or attempted amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought. Religious syncretism is the blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system, or the incorporation into a religious tradition of beliefs from unrelated traditions.

Syncretism can occur for many reasons. It happens quite commonly in areas where multiple religious traditions exist in proximity and function actively in the culture, or when a culture is conquered, and the conquerors bring their religious beliefs with them, but do not succeed in entirely eradicating the old beliefs or, especially, practices.

Islam, for example, was originally influenced by 7th century Arab culture, but not by African culture, with which it has no primary contact. Christianity draws heavily from Jewish culture (since Jesus was a Jew), but also bears the influence of the Roman Empire, in which the religion developed for its first several hundred years.

Syncretism is assessed from two contrasting perspectives. There are those who welcome it as positive. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India have made many adaptations, assimilating elements of various diverse religious traditions. But there are many others who do not assess it as positive. This happens when unrelated or even contrasting beliefs and practices are brought to each other without sufficient and

deep study. Staunch adherents of exclusivist religious approaches denounce syncretic trends as betrayal of pure truth or distortion of original faith. Non-exclusivist systems of belief, on the other hand, may feel quite free to incorporate other traditions into their own.

Syncretism is distinguished from assimilation which refers the ability to “incorporate

all that is true, good, and beautiful in the world.” Christianity has assimilated many (though not all) of the ideas of Plato and Aristotle. Augustine of Hippo is remembered for assimilating the ideas of Plato, while Thomas Aquinas is known for doing so with the ideas of Aristotle.

Recap

- ◆ Religion implies a group of believers – Community.
- ◆ Religion is concerned with matters thought to be sacred - Consecrated.
- ◆ Religion involves a specific set of beliefs - Creed.
- ◆ Religion involves a specific set of practices or rituals – Ceremonies.
- ◆ Religion provides moral definitions - Code.
- ◆ The religions generally accepted as monotheistic are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- ◆ There are four Vedas: the foremost collection of such poems.
- ◆ The entire corpus of Vedic literature - the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads.
- ◆ The caste system divides Hindus into four main categories - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras.
- ◆ Ashrama in Hinduism, refers to any of the four stages of life through which a Hindu ideally will pass.
- ◆ Islam is the name of the religion that the Muslims follow.
- ◆ Islam, which is practiced by more than 1.91 billion people, i.e., 25% of the global population, is the second largest religion.
- ◆ The Quran is divided into 114 chapters of different topics and lengths, known as Surah. Each surah is made up of verses, known as Ayat (or ayah).
- ◆ Shariah is the Islamic law derived from the words of Prophet Muhammad, called “hadith,” his actions, called “sunnah,” and the Quran, which he presented.
- ◆ Christianity is a monotheistic religion, believing in one God who created the whole universe.
- ◆ The major Christian holy days are the Christmas (the birthday of Jesus Christ), the Good Friday (the death day of Jesus) and the Easter (the resurrection of Jesus).

- ◆ The Catholic Church in India is composed of three individual Churches - Latin, Malabar and Malankara.
- ◆ Sikhism was founded in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent in the late 15th century.
- ◆ There are five articles of Sikh faith (Kakar). They are Kachhera - Loose undergarment, Kanga - Wooden comb, Kara - Iron Bangle, Kes - Unshorn hair and Kirpan - Ceremonial short sword.
- ◆ There are two books that stand out above all others in the Sikh religion: the Adi Granth (“First Book”) - unquestionably the greater of the two - and the Dasam Granth (“Tenth Book”).
- ◆ The word Jainism is derived from the Sanskrit verb ji meaning “to conquer.”
- ◆ Mahavira, like the Buddha, was the son of a chieftain of the Kshatriya (warrior) class.
- ◆ The three main pillars of Jainism are ahimsā (non-violence), anekāntavāda (non-absolutism), and aparigraha (non-attachment).
- ◆ Buddhism developed in two directions represented by two different groups: Hinayana and Theravada.
- ◆ The Buddhist monks are the highest group in the social hierarchy of Buddhism.

Objective Questions

1. From which word 'religion' was originated?
2. Which are the schools that reject the authority of the Vedas?
3. What is the word meaning of ‘Vedas’?
4. What is meant by the word ‘Upanishad’?
5. What are the four main castes prevailed in the Indian society?
6. What are the four stages of life a Hindu ideally will pass?
7. What are the six systems of Indian philosophy?
8. How many chapters are there in the Quran?
9. The general consensus of opinion among the companions of the Prophet or the learned scholars in Islam is known as?
10. Which is the largest religion of the world?

Answers

1. Religare
2. Carvaka, Jainism and Buddhism
3. Knowledge
4. Sitting down near
5. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and the Shudras
6. The student, the householder, The forest dweller and the homeless renouncer.
7. Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaishesika, Purva Mimansa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimansa
8. 114
9. Ijma
10. Christianity

Assignments

1. Discuss the features of Christianity as a religion and examine its advent to Kerala.
2. Describe the major characteristics of Sikhism as a religion.
3. Explain Sikh literature, rites and festivals.
4. Elaborate Jainism as a religion and discuss its structure and philosophy.
5. Examine the genesis and branches of Buddhism.
6. What are the four noble truths? Discuss the philosophy and social structure of Buddhism.
7. Compare and contrast Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism in terms of philosophy, rituals and practices and identify major similarities and differences.
8. Do you favour Religious Syncretism? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

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UNIT

Tribal Religions and Atheist Traditions in India: Charvaka / Lokayata

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ comprehend the features and structure of tribal religions in India
- ◆ identify the atheist traditions in India
- ◆ examine Charvaka's Lokayata philosophy

Prerequisites

India, a land of diverse cultures and traditions, is home to a multitude of religious beliefs and practices, ranging from tribal faiths to established systems of thought. Tribal religion in India is characterized by animism, nature worship, and an intricate connection to the environment. The tribal communities, often residing in remote and isolated areas, have maintained their spiritual practices that revolve around ancestral worship, deities connected to natural elements, and the reverence of spirits that inhabit the land. These belief systems not only reflect the unique worldview of indigenous groups but also demonstrate an intimate relationship with nature and a deep sense of community cohesion.

On the other hand, India has also witnessed the rise of atheistic and agnostic traditions, which challenge the notion of a supreme deity or divine intervention in human affairs. Philosophies such as those found in the Charvaka school of thought, as well as modern secular movements, have advocated for a rational and empirical approach to understand the world. These traditions, though often overshadowed by the dominant religious narratives, contribute to the intellectual landscape of India, offering alternative ways of interpreting existence and human purpose without reliance on the divine. The intersection of tribal religions and atheistic traditions

presents a fascinating contrast in India's spiritual and philosophical diversity, highlighting the spectrum of beliefs that coexist and interact in the country.

Keywords

Tribal, Atheist, Lokayata, Charvaka, Indigenous people, Magic, Modernisation

Discussion

4.2.1 Tribal Religions: Features

The study of tribal religions is an important aspect of understanding Indian society. Adivasis, or indigenous communities, have historically practiced religious traditions that are distinct from those of other inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent. They differ from other groups in terms of their way of life, rituals, and spiritual practices. The structure of their social interactions and their means of livelihood contribute to their identity as unique communities.

In the previous unit, we explored some of the major world religions. Here, we will examine the religious systems practiced by tribal communities in India.

Defining “tribe” in a universally accepted manner is challenging. The English word

“tribe” originates from the Latin word “tribus,” which originally referred to a group of people forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor. As a type of social organization, the term “tribe” signifies a set of characteristic features and denotes a distinct form of social structure.

In a general sense, a tribe is a group of people, having common habitat, physical characteristics, culture, customs, dialect, religion, traditions and social institutions. They have a strong sense of unity. The tribe is usually headed by a chief.

It is good to know of another term, *Indigenous People*, close in meaning and at times used interchangeably with Tribal People. The term “indigenous” comes from a Latin root from which we have the words “gender,” “generation” and “genesis.” It

Definitions

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

Gillin and Gillin: “A tribe is a group of local communities, which lives in a common area, speaks a common dialect and follows a common culture.”

is connected with birth, reproduction, and descent. Indigenous people are the descendants of those who were in a particular land before others who later constitute the mainstream and dominant society. They are defined partly by descent, partly by the particular features that indicate their distinctiveness from those who arrived later, such as their language and ways of life, and partly by their own view of themselves. It means the same as “native,” but in many places that word is not used now because it carries too many negative colonial associations. Not all indigenous peoples are tribal: the Quechua and Aymara Indians of the Andes, for example, form what could best be described as an indigenous peasantry, being the majority rural, agrarian population in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, and often integrated into the national economy. Tribal peoples have a special status acknowledged in international law as well as problems in addition to those faced by the wider category of indigenous people.

According to calculations based on varying criteria, there are between 370 and 500 million indigenous people worldwide, i.e., about 5 to 6.2% of world population. They are found in 70 to 90 countries. Coming to the Indian scenario, according to Census - 2011, the tribal population of India is 104,545,716; 8.6% of the total population of India. That being a significant number, the study of tribal religions has to be seriously pursued.

4.2.1.1 Characteristics of Tribal Religions

Religion pervades and influences all aspects of the life of tribes. All the major events of life – individual and social – such as birth, marriage, death, etc. are all marked by religious ceremonies and rites.

The tribal religions are generally simple. They may appear basic and rudimentary to the sophisticated world. Most of them

may not have elaborate philosophical and theological bases, familiar to the followers of world religions. Several of them do not have written scripture, partly because they lack written language. It is difficult to categorize their belief. Sir Edward Tylor in 1871 called it as Animism - the belief that all things including people, animals, geographic features, natural phenomenon, and inanimate objects possess a spirit (anima) that connects them to one another. He held that animism was the earliest form of religion. Sociologist Emile Durkheim found that the earliest form of religion was Totemism. Totem is a natural object that is believed by a particular society to have spiritual significance. It is adopted by that human group as its emblem. Its name is associated with the group. The members of the group have a special mystical relationship with the totem.

Several tribes use myths - a sacred narrative that expresses the unobservable / invisible realities of religious belief in terms of observable / visible phenomena. These are nearly as influential as history. Most myths may be oral, not written down.

Dreams and visions are important for tribal communities. The cosmos is believed to be two-dimensional. The spirit world is attributed even more reality than this-world reality. The superhuman world is the real world, which is ritually replicated in space and time. The believer communicates with this world through a symbolic code consisting of (a) esoteric word, *mantra*, (b) gesture, *mudra*, (c) sound, *dhvani*, (d) everyday language of interaction, *vyavahariki*. Tribal people tend to trust dreams and visions more than the experiences of this world.

a. Rituals and Practices

Sacrifices of animals, crops (seeds), even of human beings (cannibalism) are practised in varying degrees by different tribes. Rites



and rituals abound during initiation, birth, puberty, marriage, war, sickness, divorce, eating, cooking, planting, reaping, herding, house-building, departing and arriving, buying, selling, purification or burial. The underlying structure of the tribal ritual complex reflects and associates with the superhuman world; but it is equally a strong reinforcement of the human world itself. Both social and aesthetic aspects of life are enriched. The rites and rituals play an integrative function in tribal society. Tribal religion is concerned with the maintenance of social and cosmic harmony and with attaining this-worldly goods or benefits such as rain, harvest, children, health, victory, and so on.

Religious persons such as priests, shamans are believed to have special powers or abilities to relate to the spirit world, by possession, revelation, trances, ecstasy. In tribal religions there are strict prohibitions known as taboos stating what is allowed and what is not. We are familiar with magic which we understand as tricks played by magicians deploying certain skills. In tribal communities' magic had to do more with the spirit-world.

Witchcraft, sorcery and magic were practised to obtain positive results or to invite destruction on enemies. Witchcraft is an art of using supernatural powers by those having inherent mystical powers to gain desired good results. Sorcery is an art of using supernatural powers to gain desired bad results. Someone using magical powers to kill someone or harm someone intentionally is using sorcery. They meet the spiritual search of participants and meet their psychological needs. People expected these to be effective. They were practiced by respected leaders of the community and so had the approval of the society.

4.2.1.2 Tribal Religions: Changes

Tribal religions have undergone many

changes. Some changes have been initiated in tribal religions with utmost respect for the original ways and feelings of tribes, retaining their customs and avoiding major injury to their culture. Some of the rites and rituals have been changed. In some cases, beliefs and practices of tribal religions have been modified.

As to the causes, major world religions have made inroads into tribal religions and some members of the tribal communities have adopted the dominant world religions. Some followers of tribal religions have moved out of their geographical location and interacted with people outside their group. So there have been changes in social aspects such as education, marriage, jobs, dress code, food habits and other allied areas of life. The processes of modernization, globalization, westernization, and urbanization have effected changes. The tribal communities are not immune from the transformation effected by the social media. Historically several tribal communities were forest dwellers. The forest, their mother, provide them everything for life. This too has undergone change in the modern times.

a. Tribal Society and the Social Change

Social change is an ongoing and inevitable process, as change is an inherent aspect of nature. No society can remain unchanged, and all societies experience transformation over time. Tribal societies are no exception to this principle. Tribal cultures are distinct and often stand apart from mainstream culture in significant ways. Tribal people assert their cultural identity through their social and political structures, language, rituals, festivals, and even in their clothing, adornments, technology, arts, and crafts. They live communally, sharing nearly everything within their group. To ensure the sustainable use of their resources, tribal communities have traditionally managed them collectively, developing myths and social controls to

meet the needs of current generation while safeguarding against over-exploitation, thus ensuring the preservation of these resources for future generations.

Tribal societies have undergone a shift from traditional structures to more contemporary forms in response to changing circumstances. Traditional practices have been transformed to some extent due to the influence of modernity. Significant changes in the economic and political landscape of tribal populations have had a profound impact on the social systems within these communities.

The process of globalization, which began with increased interaction between societies worldwide, has had a notable effect on many indigenous groups. In India, tribes have had contact with non-tribal communities for centuries, as evidenced in various mythological and historical texts. However, interactions intensified during the colonial and post-colonial periods, especially due to the large-scale migration of non-tribals into tribal regions. For instance, the construction of railway tracks through tribal areas for coal transportation in Telangana, and iron ore extraction in Andhra Pradesh, led to an influx of non-tribal people. Additionally, the establishment of industries like rayon factories, paper mills, and plywood factories in tribal areas further spurred this migration. Improvements in health, communication, and trade opportunities also attracted non-tribal populations to these regions, resulting in a significant non-tribal presence. Anthropological studies focusing on tribe-caste mobility, tribe-caste continuity, and the relationship between Hinduism and tribal religions highlight these ongoing changes.

Development projects often have a disproportionately negative impact on the most marginalized groups in Indian society, particularly those from scheduled castes and tribal communities, exacerbating their

poverty due to the loss of livelihoods, land, resources, and social structures. A growing issue for Indigenous Peoples is land grabbing, where vast areas of land are acquired by domestic and transnational corporations, governments, or individuals, primarily for agricultural purposes. These large-scale agricultural investments frequently result in the displacement of local populations, often without proper compensation.

According to the World Bank, development projects displace approximately one million people every year in developing countries, forcing them to leave their land and homes. In India, between 1951 and 1990, around 21.3 million people were displaced due to such projects. Of this number, 8.54 million (40 percent) were tribal or indigenous people, and only 2.12 million (24.8 percent) were resettled. The economic, social, health, and environmental consequences of resource scarcity are closely interconnected and have a compounding effect on each other. According to the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes made up about 8.2 percent of India's total population but represented 55.16 percent of the total displaced population, highlighting the disproportionate impact on tribal communities. Development-induced displacement of tribes occurs across many states, particularly in regions with high tribal populations such as Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. Additionally, over the past 60 years, various dam projects have displaced around 60 million people, with an estimated 40 million left destitute, often forced into begging on the streets.

4.2.2 Atheist Traditions in India: Charvaka and Lokayata

The openness of India permitted the growth of theistic and atheistic traditions. Religious traditions which accepted the authority of the Vedas have been called orthodox systems and those which did not

respect the Vedas were called heterodox, Jainism and Buddhism falling under this second category. We have already studied the major theistic traditions. We shall now pass on to the atheistic traditions.

4.2.2.1 Charvaka and Lokayata

Theism and atheism are two major theories with regard to belief in the supernatural. Theism believes in the existence of the infinite being while atheism does not. As we have seen, a sense of the sacred is one of the sociological characteristics of religion. Religions express this sense of the sacred through belief in some type of the Supernatural – it could be one God (monotheism), many Gods (polytheism), one Reality (Monism). In certain cases, the sacred beings are deified human beings such as founders of religions or deceased ancestors. In some other cases, there are specific features of the nature such as the Sun & the Wind.

Among the atheistic theories, the major Indian atheistic theory is Charvaka. We are familiar today with consumerism which to some extent is based on the philosophy or ideology of materialism upholding matter and its modifications. There had been such a thought, called *Charvaka*, in India from around 600 BCE.

The etymology of the word *Charvaka* has not been conclusively established. It may be from *charu-vaka* meaning sweet-tongued indicating the superficial attractiveness of the system. It is also called Lokayata or philosophy of the people. Its founder has not been also identified for sure. Some maintain that Charvaka was the name of the founder while others say that Charvaka was a disciple of the founder, a reformer named Brhaspati.

Charvaka Philosophy

There is not enough original literature

available to know about this system. We know more about it from its refutation or criticism by Buddhism and Jainism. Like Buddhism and Jainism, Charvaka system is non-Vedic / Nasthika (i.e., it does not accept the authority of the Vedas). But unlike those two which accept ways of spiritual life, the Charvaka is completely materialistic. It is a non-Vedic Indian materialistic school of philosophy. Its followers rejected the notion of an after-world, karma, liberation (*moksha*), the authority of the sacred scriptures, and the immortality of the self. In a sense it was a reaction against the overly ritualistic Brahmanic religion and the idealism of the Upanishads. Of the recognized four means /sources of knowledge (*pramana*), the Charvaka recognized only perception (*pratyaksha*). So, they could not admit non-material realities. According to them, sensual pleasure is the best goal in life. Suffering is simply the privation of pleasure and the cure for this is the pursuit of sensual enjoyment. Among the *purusharthas* (ideals of life), the Charvaka rejects *dharma* and *moksa* and value only *kama*.

The essential tenets of the philosophy were:

- Direct perception is the only means of establishing and accepting any truth.
- What cannot be perceived and understood by the senses does not exist.
- All that exist are the observable elements of air, earth, fire, and water
- The ultimate good in life is pleasure; the only evil is pain.
- Pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain is the sole purpose of human existence.
- Religion is an invention of the powerful and the clever who prey on the weak.

The ambience in which Charvaka views

arose was quite inimical to it. In the stronghold of Upanishad idealism and priestly domination, materialistic ideas would not be welcomed. It is even doubted whether this school was ever popular. Nevertheless, the concepts developed by materialism contributed to the intellectual climate which facilitated the development of scientific thought. It anticipated the atheistic thoughts

and hedonistic school, most famously the work of Epicurus (341-270 BCE). These ideas influenced the empiricist and utilitarian philosophies of the 19th century CE and the existential movement of the 20th century CE. The intellectual climate favoured by the Charvaka system facilitated the composition of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* ("The Science of Material Gain").

Recap

- ◆ The English word *tribe* has come from the Latin word *tribus*.
- ◆ The tribe is usually headed by a chief.
- ◆ It is good to know of another term, *Indigenous People*, close in meaning and at times used interchangeably with tribal people.
- ◆ Sociologist Emile Durkheim identified the earliest form of religion as Totemism.
- ◆ The cosmos is believed to be two-dimensional.
- ◆ Tribal religions have undergone many changes.
- ◆ The process of globalization, which began with increased interaction between societies worldwide, has had a notable effect on many indigenous groups.
- ◆ According to the 2011 Census, Scheduled Tribes made up about 8.2 percent of India's total population but represented 55.16 percent of the total displaced population.
- ◆ The etymology of the word *Charvaka* has not been conclusively established.
- ◆ The Charvaka recognized only perception (*pratyaksha*).
- ◆ The intellectual climate favoured by the Charvaka system facilitated the composition of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* ("The Science of Material Gain").

Objective Questions

1. Who authored *Arthashastra*?
2. From which word 'tribe' was derived?
3. Who presented the Animism for the first time?

4. Who introduced the term Totemism in Sociology?
5. Who is referred to as an "Individual with special powers or abilities to relate to the spirit world?"
6. How much Scheduled Tribes contribute to India's total population?
7. What is the name of the atheist tradition that existed in India?

Answers

1. Kautilya
2. Tribes
3. Edward Tylor
4. Emile Durkheim
5. Shaman
6. 8.2%
7. Charvaka/ Lokayata

Assignments

1. Have you met tribal people or Adivasis ever? How do you remember them in their presence. Find out their features and life characteristics.
2. Define tribal religion and examine their rituals and practices.
3. Analyse the social transformation in the tribal people. List out the impact of globalization on the tribal area.
4. Examine the atheist traditions in India and discuss the Charvaka philosophy.

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BLOCK

Indian Society: Contemporary Debates



UNIT

Communalism, Secularism, Regionalism, Citizenship and Identity

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ♦ understand the concepts of communalism and secularism
- ♦ examine the history of regionalism
- ♦ familiarise themselves with the concepts of citizenship and identity

Prerequisites

Whenever you read newspaper on these days, your eyes may be stuck on reports related to communal tensions, mob lynching and cow vigilantism. Communal violence persisted always a curse of India and still continues. During the decades, country witnessed multiple bloodshed communal riots in which thousands lost their life and livelihood for example you may recall Gujarat riot in 2002 and Delhi riots in 2020. Communalism is viewed as an ideology that divides society into religious, ethnic or social groups and promotes their interests over the larger society and can lead to conflict and violence between groups. Politicization of religion, divide and rule policy by the administration, hate speech by politicians and cow vigilantism worked as perpetrators of violence.

Communalism has varying shades of meaning in different contexts. It denotes attempts to construct a religious or ethnic identity, incite strife between people identified as different communities, and stimulate communal violence between those groups. It implies differentiation and discrimination shown towards people based on caste, creed, race and colour. Even though it is popularly applied to distinctions based on religion, the concept also applies to other criteria.

Keywords

Religion, Ideology, Localisation, Religious, Identity, Citizenship

Discussion

5.1.1 Communalism

Mere affiliation to a religious community's social, cultural and service aspects does not amount to communalism. It assumes that the followers of a particular religion have specific interests that differ from other religions. Communalism derives from history, differences in beliefs, and tensions between the communities. It has political underpinnings in as much as it advocates followers of a particular religion to have political allegiance to their religious community. Communalism is not praiseworthy because it is borne out of misplaced or disordered loyalty to one's communities, which gives rise to hatred for others. It is a social menace likely to give rise to conflicts among people. It is hazardous for the integrity and development of the country. In essence, communalism is opposed to secularism and even humanism.

Communalism and communism are derived from the Latin *communis*, meaning "shared" or "common". Due to the similarity in the terms, misunderstanding is likely. So, let us clarify. Communism is a philosophical, social, political, and economic ideology and movement whose ultimate goal is the establishment of a communist society, namely a socio-economic order structured upon the ideas of shared ownership of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money, and, in some cases, the state. One of the early inspirations of communism is considered to be the ideal state described in Plato's *Republic*, in which the governing class of guardians devotes itself to serving

the interests of the whole community. The form of solidarity and sharing described in the Bible as practiced by the early Christian community is considered another inspiration. The deployment and expansion of this ideology by Karl Marx contributed to making it a political system as well.

Historian Harbans Mukhia states, "Communalism is the phenomenon of religious differences between groups, often leading to tension and even rioting between them." D.E. Smith sees communalism as the functioning of religious communities in a way that is generally considered detrimental to the interests of other groups or the nation. According to Prabha Dixit, communalism is a political doctrine that uses religious and cultural differences to garner political gains. While communalism is an ideology, 'communal violence is a demonstration of this ideology.'

5.1.1.1 Dimensions of Communalism

T.K. Oomen, a famous sociologist, has suggested six dimensions of communalism. When examined, certain of the actions and activities of specific groups are found to have communalistic characteristics.

These dimensions are:

a) Assimilationist (or) Communist Communalism

Under this type of communalism, small religious groups are assimilated into more significant religious groups. For instance, scheduled tribes, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists

are often considered Hindus and are covered by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955. In addition, all of them should be covered with the same personal law. Hence, a Sikh, Buddhist, or Jain does not identify himself/herself too much different from a Hindu and Hindu religious beliefs and sentiments. They have been assimilated into Hinduism to some extent.

b)Welfarist Communalism

In this type of communalism, emphasis is placed on the welfare of the particular community. Providing education, scholarship, financial assistance in higher studies, matrimonial assistance, skill development, and residential accommodation are examples of the services provided under this type of communalism. These welfarist organisations are involved in charitable and other social uplift activities for their particular community alone.

c) Retreatist Communalism

In this type of communalism, a community keeps itself aloof from all politically related activities. For example, people in the Bahai religious community avoid political activity. The case of the Tibetan community, given asylum in India in 1959, may be noted here. As they have not been given the status of refugees but foreigners, they do not or cannot participate in most national activities.

d) Retaliatory Communalism

In this type of communalism, people belonging to one religious community attempt to harm, hurt and injure the members of other religious communities. This type of communalism can be witnessed when there is a fight between different groups based on religion, caste, etc. The Godhra Riots and its aftermath are considered as examples. Time and again, sporadic incidents of violence erupt between the state's indigenous population and Bengali migrants in the Kokrajhar District of Assam.

e) Separatist Communalism

In this type of communalism, one religious community maintains its cultural specificity. Furthermore, it demands a separate territorial state within the country, for example, the demand for Gorkhaland by Gorkhas, Bodoland by Bodos, Vidharbha in Maharashtra, and separatist tendencies in Mizoram.

f) Secessionist Communalism

In this type of communalism, a religious community demands a separate political identity and insists on having a separate state. For example, the demand for Khalistan, the demand for an independent Kashmir by militant groups in Kashmir, falls under this category. Of all the above types of communalism, the last three categories create problems by perpetuating communal riots, terrorism and insurgency.

5.1.1.2 History of Communalism

The term was used in the early 20th century during British colonial rule. Nevertheless, it is not exclusive to South Asia or the 20th century. It has been noted in different parts of the world among members of groups based on religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, etc. Even before the term was coined, communalistic tendencies have been part of the history of humankind. As there are several differences and distinctions among human beings, unless channelled very carefully, the danger of communalism always exists.

Ancient India has been generally marked as a period of peace, as tolerance has been a hallmark of Indian culture. There was acceptance of each other's culture and tradition. For example, Ashoka followed religious tolerance and focused mainly on Dhamma. In the Medieval period, Akbar was the epitome of secular practices. There were a few sectarian rulers like Aurangzeb,



who were little tolerant of other religious practices. Nevertheless, these were often guided purely by their greed for power and wealth and not a massive imposition of persecution. It never became a barrier to the peaceful coexistence.

Communalism is said to have had a gradual beginning in India during the rule of the British East India Company. It is alleged that the effective control and management of the wide diversity of India – religious, political, linguistic, cultural, etc. - was a great challenge for the British, and they identified communalism as an effective weapon in the policy of divide and rule.

Communalism in India is considered to have its roots in the partition of Bengal on religious lines in 1905 and the feature of a separate electorate for Muslims and Hindus under the Government of India Act 1909. Later, the British Government, through a Communal award in 1932, provided separate representation for Muslims, Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, Europeans, the Landlords, the depressed classes and commerce and industry. These provisions by the British deepened the feeling of communalism in India.

In the march to independence in 1947, communalism and nationalism became competing ideologies. As the nationalist movements were gaining ground, groups based on specific identities such as religion, ethnicity, etc., too, showed their ugly face at times. Later, people with vested interests exploited these groups to their advantage. As a result, communal riots have not been rare in India.

Coming to the predicament after independence, finding any political party that has not played the communal card for electoral gains is difficult. They have compromised with and often accommodated the communal forces. They have associated and entered into alliances with communal

parties. The politicisation of religion, too, has been a fact in our country. In order to empower religion and achieve certain narrow ends of religion, politics has adopted three stages in Indian Communalism.

Bipan Chandra has identified three stages in the rise of Indian communalism.

1. First Stage – Communal Consciousness

The rise of nationalist Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, etc, marked the first stage in Indian communalism. The roots of this stage of communalism lie in the religious revivalist movements that happened in the later part of the 19th century. In that period, India witnessed Hindu revivalist movements like Arya Samaj's Shuddhi movement, cow protection riots (1892), etc.

Similarly, the Islam revivalist movements like Haji Shariatullah's Faraizi movement, which is aimed at bringing the Bengali Muslims back on the true path of Islam, had a bearing on communalism in the later part of the 19th century. Also, people like Syed Ahmed Khan, who, despite having a scientific and rational approach, aggravated the sentiments of Indian Muslims by projecting them as a separate community (*qaum*) having different interests when compared with other religious communities.

2. Second Stage - Liberal Communalism

In this stage of Indian communalism, the communal politics was liberal, democratic and humanist with nationalist values. This stage extended till 1937. In this stage, people belonging to a particular group start believing that their social, economic, political and cultural interests differ from those of the other communities.

3. Third Stage - Extreme Communalism

The third stage of communalism had a fascist syndrome. This form of communalism was extreme and was primarily based on fear and hatred. In this stage, the communal elements made use of violence and demanded a separate nation. This stage is characterised by the people's belief that their interests are different and contradictory to those of other communities. It was practised by the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha after 1937.

Communalism is harmful to democracy due to the following consequences:

- a. It propagates mutual hatred among religious groups.
- b. It leads to unrest and even destruction of life and property.
- c. It threatens the unity and the strength of the nation.
- d. It spreads unwarranted mutual accusations, insults and even physical combat among the religious groups.

Our country is very vulnerable to communal clashes. Any attempt to fan the flame of communalism is detrimental to the unity and integrity of our nation. It can damage our nation beyond repair. The Governments are very alert to such issues. Let history assess the sincerity of such efforts. Let every citizen of our noble nation avoid every trait of communalism.

5.1.2 Secularism

The secular character of India is enshrined in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. India has been declared a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. The terms *Socialist* and *Secular* were added by the 42nd Amendment in 1976. *Secular* is one of the proud characters of the nation. Let

us understand its meaning and implication in upholding this noble identity.

Secularism is derived from the Latin word *saeculum*, which means an age or era (*yuga*). The word secularism comes from the Latin word *speculum*, which means “generation,” “age,” “century,” or “world”. George Jacob Holyoake coined the word *secularism* in 1846. Holyoake, in *the Principles of Secularism*, describes secularism as “the study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule and making the service of others a duty of life. Secularism relates to the present existence of man and action, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life having for its objects the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point, as the immediate duty of society.”

In sociology, secularisation is a well-known interpretative design used to understand the status and role of religion in society. The term was mentioned by Emile Durkheim, used by Max Weber, and picked up by later sociologists. Durkheim contrasted the concepts of the sacred and the profane. By the sacred, he meant what is set apart from life's ordinary, commonplace arena. It is also understood as what is forbidden for the ordinary. For example, a place, an object or a person kept away from the usual and ordinary interaction. The opposite of secularisation is sacralisation, the process by which something is considered sacred and set apart. It is important to remember that according to sociological understanding, the sacred is not equal to gods/spirits / the good. The society / the community of believers determines something as sacred or secular. It is not easy to draw the line between the sacred and the secular, as all values are culturally defined in some manner or degree.



between state and religion. Indian secularism protects both believers and non-believers. In the words of P B Gajendragadkar, a former Chief Justice of India, Secularism is defined as ‘The State does not owe loyalty to any particular religion as such: it is not irreligious or anti-religious; it gives equal freedom to all religions.’”

- The Indian vision of secularism is related to “Sarva Dharma Sambhava” (literally, it means that the destination of the paths followed by all religions is the same, though the paths themselves may be different), which means equal respect for all religions.

a) Secularism in Ancient India

Religions have co-existed and evolved together for many centuries in India. In Ancient India, Hinduism welcomed different spiritual traditions and tried to integrate them into a typical mainstream. The *Vedas* and the various interpretations of the *Upanishads* and the *Puranas* highlight the religious plurality of Hinduism. The Ellora cave temples - built next to each other between the 5th and 10th centuries exemplify the coexistence of religions and a spirit of acceptance of different faiths. Emperor Ashoka was the first great emperor to announce, as early as the 3rd century B.C., that the state would not prosecute any religious sect. In his 12th Rock Edict, he appealed to tolerating all religious sects and developing a great respect toward them. Secularism in India is as old as the Indus Valley civilisation. Priests did not rule the cities of lower Mesopotamia and Harappa civilisation. Dance and music were secular in these urban civilisations. The people in Ancient India had freedom of religion, and the state granted Citizenship to each individual.

The above is the general understanding of the secularism of Ancient India, and dissident voices are not altogether absent. In his book *Against the Grain: Notes on*

Identity, Intolerance and History, historian DN Jha challenges depicting Ancient India as peaceful. It is argued that Brahminical sects “bore huge animosity towards the two heterodox religions, Buddhism and Jainism,” resulting in attacks and the appropriation of Buddhist and Jain sacred places. For example, in the 7th century, King Shashanka cut down the Bodhi tree, under which Buddha gained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya. He replaced the Buddha’s statue with Shiva’s in a local temple. Seven centuries earlier, in 185 BC, Pushyamitra Shunga overthrew the Buddhist Mauryan dynasty and destroyed The Ashokan pillared hall and the Kukkutarama monastery were both located in Pataliputra, an ancient city in eastern India. He is also said to have vandalised the famous Sanchi Stupa, burnt down the Ghositaram a monastery in Kaushambi, and killed Buddhist monks. Kalhana’s Rajatarangini mentions Jalauka, a Shaivite king, destroying Buddhist monasteries even when the Mauryan emperor Ashoka was likely alive. Kalhana refers to King Nara burning thousands of monasteries in retaliation against a monk who had seduced his wife. The 10th-century ruler Kshemagupta destroyed a Buddhist monastery to build the Kshemagaurishvara temple.

There were bitter ideological battles. For instance, Sanskrit grammarian Patanjali, in Mahabhashya, likens the relationship between “Shramanas [Buddhists and Jains] and Brahmanas” to that between the snake and the mongoose. The 12th-century Jain scholar Hemachandra denounced the ancient code of law *Manusmriti* because it supported ritual violence. Vaishnava poet-saint Tirumankai stole a sizeable golden image of Buddha from a stupa in Nagapattinam and melted it for reuse in a temple Vishnu had commissioned him to build. The hagiographies of the Lingayat saint Basava speak of the slaughter of Jains and the appropriation of their temples by his followers.

These are just some of the examples taken from Jha’s list of religious sites that were appropriated or destroyed, making it clear that ancient India witnessed a level of religious violence that was certainly not insignificant.

b) Secularism in Medieval India

In Medieval India, the Sufi and Bhakti movements restored the secular character of Indian society. They spread the different facets of secularism, like tolerance, a sense of brotherhood, universalism, harmony, and peace in society. The leading light of these movements was Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Baba Farid, Saint Kabir Das, Guru Nanak Dev, Saint Tukaram, and Mira Bai. Religious toleration and freedom of worship marked the State under Mughal emperor Akbar in medieval India. Some Hindus worked for him as his minister. He abolished the Jizya tax and forbade forcible conversions. The promulgation of ‘Din-i-Ilahi’, or the Divine Faith, is the most prominent evidence of his tolerance policy. Din-i-ilahi had elements of both the Hindu and Muslim faith. The construction of Ibadat Khana (house of worship) in Fatehpur Sikri was done to nurture religious harmony by allowing different religious leaders to express their opinions in the same place. This assembly’s participants included theologians from Brahmins, Jains and Zoroastrians. He emphasised the concept of ‘sulh-i-kul’ or peace and harmony among religions.

c) Secularism in Modern India

India came into the control of the East India Company and the British Raj after Aurangzeb. The British East India Company pursued the policy of ‘divide and rule’, contributing to some extent to communal discord between various communities. This policy was exemplified in The Partition of Bengal in 1905, providing separate electorates through the Indian



Councils Act of 1909 and the Government of India Act 1919 and 1935. However, the Indian freedom movement was marked by secular tradition and ethos right from the start. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, which had secular values, united the people from all sects and took the freedom movement on a constructive and successful path. Nehru gave a detailed

report (1928) that called for the abolition of the separate electorate to find a secular state. Gandhiji's secularism was based on a commitment to the brotherhood of religious communities based on their respect for and pursuit of truth, whereas Jawaharlal Nehru's Secularism was based on a commitment to scientific humanism tinged with a progressive view of historical change.

Indian Constitution	Provisions for Secularism
Article 14	Grants equality before the law and equal protection of the laws to all
Article 15	It prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
Article 16 (1)	Equal opportunity to all citizens in matters of public employment and reiterates no discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth and residence.
Article 25	<p>It guarantees six fundamental rights, one of which is freedom of religion. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution gives each citizen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Freedom of Conscience <input type="checkbox"/> Right to Profess any religion <input type="checkbox"/> Right to Practice any religion <input type="checkbox"/> Right to Propagate any religion <p>Article 25 includes religious beliefs (doctrines) and practices (rituals). These rights are available to all persons—citizens as well as non-citizens. However, the govt. Can impose reasonable restrictions on the fundamental rights of the citizens in time of need.</p>
Article 26	Every religious group/ individual has the right to establish and maintain religious and charitable institutions and to manage its affairs in matters of religion.
Article 27	The state shall not compel citizens to pay taxes to promote or maintain any particular religion or religious institution.
Article 28	Allows educational institutions maintained by different religious groups to impart religious instruction
Article 29 & 30	Provide for the cultural and educational rights of the minorities
Article 51A	It obliges all citizens to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood and to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.

Table 5.1.1 Constitutional Provision for Secularism

d) Secularism in the Indian Constitution

Indian secularism is also reflected in its fundamental rights (Article 25-28), guaranteeing citizens the right to practice any religion.

In subsequent pronouncements, the Supreme Court of India clarified the secular character of India. In 1973, in the *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* judgment, the Supreme Court of India held that secularism is part of the basic structure of the constitution and that the Parliament cannot amend the elements that constitute the basic structure.

5.1.3 Regionalism

Regionalism is a term we need to understand better the connection between the state and society. Regional and regionalism are imprecise terms regarding their uses in varying contexts and countries. They have been used in connection with everything from decentralising political power via economic restructuring to mobilising sub-national identities.

The region primarily denotes a demarcation on account of a particular feature, which may be geographical, such as terrain, climate and cultivation, such as custom, culture, heredity, language, and religion, or economic, such as marginalisation, deprivation and so on. It is one of people's many geographical and functional identities concerning others. The inhabitants of a region generally have common or similar interests. They share a common identity of belonging to a particular group. The membership can also be a mental or imaginary construct or connectedness, apart from geographical closeness or proximity and everyday connectedness. More important is the sense of 'we-feeling'. While possessing the sense of belonging to a region, the broader framework is upheld, not abandoned. These do not imagine themselves as sovereign communities but as part of a broader national sovereign community.

Regionalism is rooted in the sense of region. It may be explained as an 'insider-outsider' thought process where the loyalties are tied to something distinct within the whole. Different forms of regionalism, such as economic regionalism, linguistic regionalism, political regionalism, and even sub-regional movements, have been identified depending on their classification. Nevertheless, regionalism fundamentally also implies empowering those who belong to the region. It is the politicisation of regional identity. Regionalists frame political issues with a basis in the regional identity. It seeks to achieve legitimacy for definitions of boundaries and obtain approval for this definition in cultural, political, popular and official understandings. It tries to make meaningful regional boundaries. It is an ideology and political movement that seeks to advance the causes of regions. Regionalism as a cultural phenomenon is frequently expressed in art, literature, music, and poetry. The output in any of these is often traced back to the regional source. Regionalism is frequently linked to affective bonds between people and places or settings.

There is a difference between Regionalisation (the tendency or process to form regions) and regionalism (the purposive proneness to create regional institutions and arrangements). Regional movements pursue a unique identity and demand special privileges or considerations.

India has seen many regional movements with demands falling into the following broad categories:

- **Secessionism** – an extreme form led by Militant/Fundamentalist Groups that demand a new country separate from India.
- **Separatism** – demanding the formation of a new state which can better serve the linguistic/ethnic minorities in the region



- **Full statehood** – an example being the Indian Union Territories demanding full statehood.
- **Autonomy** – demand for more power and Independence. Eg: Gurkha Hill Council in Darjeeling

5.1.3.1 Reasons for Regionalism

It is natural for a community to see within as a distinct entity with an identity sub-national loyalties and leading to the organisation of demonstrations, movements or any other kind of effort to achieve their goal is called 'regionalism'.

Diversity is a source of significant enrichment but can be a source of division if not understood effectively. India is diverse in language, religion and culture. This diversity may be misconstrued to support regionalism. The effort to impose a particular ideology and culture may result in regionalism. For example, imposition of Hindi will cause a reaction in Tamil Nadu.

Another cause of regionalism is economic backwardness and deprivation or neglect of some parts of the country. There is economic disparity. For example, in general terms, we can say that the cities receive a large share of investment while the villages are behind, maybe by several decades. Certain political parties have taken mileage from this inequality and developed a regionalist agenda. Exploitation of discontentment, sub-national identities, geographical factors of distance and climate are also reasons for regionalism. In other cases, there may be historical and cultural factors. Caste and religion can be exploited to serve regionalism. It may be political and administrative factors. To some extent, the British colonial policy of Divide and Rule colonial policies has also sowed the seed of regionalism in India.

a. Advantages of Regionalism

Regionalism may carry certain advantages. It can promote healthy competition and be a precursor to nationalism. It can bring to the forefront vital concerns of particular regions or even minorities of any category, language, religion and gender, etc, which may otherwise go unnoticed. It may strengthen the governing bodies and political powers within a region. The process may benefit local populations by improving regional or local economies in terms of better fiscal responsibility, regional development and allocation of resources, implementation of local policies and plans, and competitiveness among regions.

Regionalism has given rise to multi-party politics in India, deepening federalism. Regionalism is not necessarily 'anti-nation' or even 'anti-people' Regionalism encourages local governments to pool resources, talent and efforts. Collaborating creates more effective planning that all governments, both big and small, can participate in. It also creates a larger budget to deliver more substantial results.

b. Disadvantages of Regionalism

However, regionalism can lead to bitterness and petty politics, such as India's numerous river water disputes. Regionalism often promotes Vote-Bank politics. Regionalism can weaken the time-tested 'Unity in Diversity' fabric if not promoted positively. For the most part, it is harmful as certain political parties promote regionalism to stay in power and consolidate it by swaying the voters in their favour. At the very least, it turns the people of the same country against each other.

Regional divisions have had positive and sometimes negative consequences. New identities, such as new political units, have been given rise to. Due to regionalism,

neglected peoples, areas, languages, cultures, etc., have won attention. There has also been bitter conflict on account of regional differences. It is often seen as a serious threat to the nation's development, progress and unity. It challenges internal security to the insurgent groups, who propagate feelings of regionalism against the mainstream politico-administrative setup of the country. Regionalism also becomes a hurdle in international diplomacy. Some regional leaders play politics of vote bank based on language culture, and this is undoubtedly against healthy democratic procedures. Indian federalism is seen as a method of accommodation of regionalism in India. Federalism is a political equilibrium resulting from the appropriate balance between shared rule and self-rule. Diversity is undoubtedly the strength of our democracy. Indians have so much to differ and divide themselves, but a thread of democracy is shared among different regions, communities, religions, and cultures. India has seen many secessionist movements since its Independence, but none were too big to challenge an everyday resourceful democracy.

5.1.4 Citizenship and Identity

We are familiar with the saying, think globally and act locally. We are part of an enormous human society, but we live at a specific location and generally form part of a particular community. At any given time, we are part of two processes: the first is around our local identity, and the second is our broader base. This fact is even more pertinent in the case of life in India, a large country with a vast population and diverse culture. Our identity keeps swinging between the global and the local poles.

5.1.4.1 The Concept of Citizenship

In classical understanding, Citizenship is an egalitarian reality that overrides all distinctions based on class, gender, race,

religion, region and ethnicity. It is a legal status granted by the state. Nevertheless, it takes on multiple meanings and forms based on citizens' everyday engagements with state and non-state actors.

The concept's roots are in the Greek polis and the Roman *res publica*. The classical account of Citizenship as an Athenian ideal," i.e. as a male warrior, is found in Aristotle's *Politics*. Aristotle states that a citizen "is defined to be one of whom both the parents are citizens" and who holds an office or is in some other way participating in the deliberative or judicial administration of the state. Citizens participate in decision-making (to rule and be ruled). To be able to participate, a citizen must be "a male of known genealogy, a patriarch, a warrior, and a master of the labour of others". Children, enslaved people, mechanics labourers, etc., were excluded. These prerequisites excluded most people from accessing it.

Nowadays, these are not the preconditions for Citizenship. The meaning has changed: Citizenship used to be acquired by your status in society, but nowadays, citizenship guarantees status. Therefore, the meaning has diverged from the Aristotelian meaning, and the legal dimension has also changed the freedom to act under the law and be protected by the law.

The concept of Citizenship connects with all aspects of people's lives. The questions of Citizenship are intimately connected with the questions of identity. Citizenship has been defined as full and equal membership of a political community. States give full rights or partial. Equality of rights and status is one of the fundamental rights of Citizenship. Citizenship provides us with a public identity, thereby delivering a modicum of security against scarcity and life's unavoidable trials and tribulations.

In principle, human rights are guaranteed to everyone, regardless of social status,



gender, or race. Nevertheless, in practice, many states violate these rights. People travelling without proper identification documents are often treated severely. Still, it does not end there; within societies, there are groups of people who do not have the same kind of recognition of their status as full members of that society. Various minorities, especially indigenous ones, have faced severe discrimination based on their status as minorities.

Citizenship includes protecting a person's rights at home and abroad. Human rights, or the implementation of human rights, are closely connected with the concept of Citizenship. Citizenship is most adequately defined in terms of both rights and duties. The idea of rights is inseparable from the idea of duties. If a person has a right, there must be someone with the corresponding duty to fulfil that right. If I have a right not to be injured, other people around me have the duty not to violate or hurt me. Many modern theories of rights do not attempt to connect the two. Citizenship is a system of contributory rights in which there is a relationship between our input into a community and what we receive in return.

Historically, the two fundamental obligations of Citizenship were taxation and military (or some related public) service. These obligations clearly marked the connection between state and Citizenship, and they were overwhelmingly the attributes of male Citizenship in the past. Some authors add family formation as a foundation of active Citizenship. Benefits such as tax exemptions have typically gone to families insofar as they contribute to the reproduction of the whole society through childbearing and socialisation. These three components have shrunk dramatically in the late 20th century as personal taxation has been reduced, the military has been privatised and outsourced, and the family has declined with shrinking

fertility rates, rising divorce rates, mobility and migration. With the erosion of traditional forms of Citizenship, especially in nationalist and welfare forms, the modern citizen tends to be merely a consumer disconnected from civil society and lives passively. Modern citizens consume politics rather than acting out political life through an information network.

There are different traditions regarding citizens. Three major traditions are referred to below.

- a) A Liberal Approach to Citizenship promotes the idea that Citizenship is a status that entitles individuals to a specific set of universal rights the state grants. Individual citizens act 'rationally' to advance their interests, while the state's role is to protect citizens in exercising their rights.
- b) Citizenship in Communitarian Thought argues that an individual's sense of identity is produced only through relations with others in the community of which she or he is a part. The Communitarian thought centres on the notion of the socially embedded citizen and community belonging. The individual can only realise her or his interests and identity through deliberation over the 'common good', and 'individual liberty is maximised through public service and prioritising the 'common good' over the pursuit of individual interests'.
- c) Citizenship in Civic Republican Thought attempts to incorporate the liberal notion of the self-interested individual within the communitarian framework of egalitarianism and community belonging. Citizenship is a common civic identity shaped by a shared public culture.

Contemporary citizenship theory links liberal, communitarian and civic republican

traditions. Many theorists attempt to find ways of uniting the liberal emphasis on individual rights, equality and due process of law, with the communitarian focus on belonging and the civic republican focus on processes of deliberation, collective action and responsibility. Citizenship is both a status, which accords a range of rights and obligations and an active practice. The former underscores the rights, while the latter underlines the duties. A balance between the two is at the heart of contemporary discussions regarding Citizenship.

5.1.4.2 Types of Citizenship

Bryan S. Turner classifies citizenship into four ideal types:

National citizenship is typically associated with ethno-nationalism, which has been important in nation-building processes from the 19th century onwards. Nation-state citizenship was a top-down political strategy to form a nation out of culturally diverse societies regarding language, religion and ethnicity.

Social citizenship is closely connected to civil society institutions rather than the state or the market. It involves the creation of social rights in association with the development of the welfare state and is consequently referred to simply as 'welfare citizenship'.

The third form of citizenship identifies the citizen who participates in the workforce, emphasising self-reliance and autonomy. Without a state-managed welfare system, this pattern of citizenship required the private provision of insurance, social security and welfare.

These three forms were never entirely separate, and various combinations were always possible, producing hybrid citizenship traditions; as a result, they can be regarded as ideal types for convenience.

Turner further argues that in the context of economic globalisation and the development of neo-liberal context of strategies, the various forms of citizenship have converged towards a new model of passive citizenship in which the state is or has withdrawn from commitment to full employment and the provision of social security, especially universal provision of welfare services, and civil-society institutions have been eroded. The result is the emergence of the apolitical, isolated citizen as a consumer. This fourth model of citizenship presupposes a consumer society, a weak state and the decline of civic institutions, where the passive citizen becomes a consumer of privatised goods and services. When these are bought online, the passive citizen no longer needs to enter the mall to shop, and the new individualism is one of passive isolation. The traditional sites of conversation for the bourgeois citizen, the café, the meeting hall, the chapel and the club, are replaced by online networks, and the social solidarity is elastic rather than 'sticky'. The rise of a fourth model of citizenship, the consumer citizen, can be interpreted as a logical consequence of financialisation.

Another way of classifying citizenship is the following: Citizenship refers to membership in the political community as a territorial or national state. The nature and content of citizenship varies with the form of state. Types of citizenship can be characterised by two distinct axes or dimensions: access to citizenship status and the quality of the rights and duties attached to citizenship. Rules of access to citizenship separate citizens from non-citizens. Two alternative legal possibilities include *jus sanguinis*, citizenship by descent and *jus soli* or Citizenship by birthplace. The former type of Citizenship is based on descent or appropriate ethnic-cultural qualities, and birth in its territory has no bearing on access to citizenship, even for second and third-generation settlers.

On the other hand, the range of possibilities under jus soli arrangements is broader and, again, different from country to country. American and Australian citizenship, for instance, can be acquired by being born in those countries. On the other hand, French citizenship is attributed to a person born in France if at least one parent was also born in France (or a French colony or territory before Independence). The legal requirements for the acquisition of citizenship by naturalisation are also quite variable between nation-states.

The second axis of citizenship, quality, refers to what is provided by formal membership of a political community once attained. The quality of citizenship comprises the rights and duties that are available to persons as citizens. The rights and duties of citizenship include not only those of political participation but also those that relate to legal and social capacities.

Recap

- ◆ Communalism is an undue attachment to one's religion at the expense of others.
- ◆ The history of India, at its different moments, is intertwined with traits of communalism.
- ◆ The tradition of secularism has deep roots in the history of India.
- ◆ Indian culture is based on blending various spiritual traditions and social movements.
- ◆ India has experienced regionalism almost throughout its history.
- ◆ The diversity of the nation provides an easy base for the same.
- ◆ Citizenship refers to membership in a political community organised as a territorial or national state.
- ◆ Social citizenship is closely connected to civil society institutions rather than the state or the market.

Objective Questions

1. From which language the term communism was derived?
2. Who coined the word secularism in 1846?
3. Who stated that a citizen "is defined as one of whom both the parents are citizens"?
4. Who authored the book *Against the Grain: Notes on Identity, Intolerance and History*?

5. Who contributed the concepts of the sacred and the profane?
6. Who classified citizenship into four ideal types of citizenship?

Answers

1. Latin
2. George Jacob Holyoake
3. Aristotle
4. DN Jha
5. Durkheim
6. Bryan S. Turner

Assignments

1. Elaborate on the dimensions of communalism.
2. Discuss the history of regionalism in India.
3. Examine the factors responsible for regionalism in India.
4. Identify any two articles in the Indian Constitution that deal with secularism and examine their effectiveness in endorsing the same.
5. Explain the concept of citizenship.
6. Describe the types of citizenship

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Social Change and Mobilisation

BLOCK



1

UNIT

Processes of Social Change

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ understand the features and causes of social movements
- ◆ familiarise with the concepts of sanskritisation, westernisation, modernization and globalization
- ◆ compare sanskritisation and westernization

Prerequisites

We learn that change is a natural part of the world. Everything in nature is always changing, whether we notice it or not. Since society is also part of nature, it keeps changing too. When these changes affect social structures, institutions, and cultural traditions, we call it social change. One of the main reasons for social change is the movement of people, which influences how societies develop in different ways. Many factors shape social change, including population growth, new ideas, technology, and the economy. However, the speed and nature of change are different in various regions and communities. As society grows and develops, there are shifts in social, economic, political, and religious structures. Changes in one area always affect others because all parts of society are connected.

Throughout history, many unfair conditions lasted for decades or even centuries before people recognized them as problems. For example, slavery, discrimination against women, untouchability, racism, communalism, poverty, inequality, and pollution were once seen as normal or unavoidable. However, social movements have helped people see these injustices, change public opinions, and fight for a

better society. Social movements do not just react to problems—they also help create change. In the same way, big social changes often lead to new movements. Society is always changing, influenced by different movements that push it in different directions. When a social movement succeeds, its ideas often become a normal part of society, leading to lasting improvements. In India, many social movements have worked to solve different problems and bring positive changes to people's lives.

To better understand how Indian society has changed over time, we can look at three important processes: Sanskritisation, Westernisation, and Modernisation. These processes show how different social groups have tried to improve their status, both inside and outside the caste system. By studying these ideas, we can learn more about the forces that have shaped Indian society over the years.

Keywords

Mobility, Dominance, Assimilation, Culture, Global

Discussion

6.1.1 Social Change

Social change refers to any variation from the usual way of life. It can happen due to changes in geography, culture, population, or new ideas. Social change may also occur through the spread of ideas from one group to another or through inventions within a society. There are three main causes of social change:

1. Conflict

You may have noticed that many conflicts arise in society due to inequalities based on class, race, gender, or religion. These conflicts lead to dissatisfaction, anger, and even hatred. When such conflicts occur, people demand change. Sometimes, they protest against the government and even try to remove leaders from power.

2. Demographic Change

When a country experiences high immigration (people moving in) or emigration (people moving out), it can have positive or negative effects on society. Have you seen such changes in Kerala? Changes in population—through immigration, emigration, births, and deaths—also affect how resources are distributed and used. Since population shifts are inevitable, they play a big role in shaping society.

3. Cultural Change

Science and technology are developing rapidly. The growth of the internet and other technologies has changed how individuals and societies communicate, work, and interact. It has also influenced the economy and the overall nature of society. However, cultural change is usually a slow process.



Importance of Social Change

When there is a significant change in social structure, institutions, and culture, we call it social change. An example of social change is the Temple Entry Proclamation by Sri Chithira Tirunal Maharaja, which allowed socially deprived people to enter temples. Let us look at the reasons why social change is important.

1. Gender Equality

Nowadays, you often hear discussions about the gender gap, which refers to serious inequalities in different areas of society. Gender disparities exist in social, political, intellectual, cultural, scientific, and economic fields. This situation demands immediate action, and protests have emerged from different sections of society. These movements push for social change, leading to actions that reduce the gender gap and ensure equal opportunities for all genders.

2. Problems of LGBTQ+

Now, let us discuss the status of LGBTQ+ people. Even in the 21st century, traditional beliefs often do not accept individuals with gender identities other than male and female. As a result, LGBTQ+ communities face discrimination, insults, and social exclusion. Many people in this community experience high rates of suicide, violence, exploitation, and discrimination. To fight against this injustice, several social movements have emerged to raise awareness about LGBTQ+ rights. A major milestone in this struggle was achieved when governments began legalizing same-sex marriages, allowing individuals to marry the person they love and securing their right to equality. This social change has helped shift cultural perspectives toward acceptance and inclusion.

3. Improves the Status of Workers

You may have seen labor strikes in different sectors where workers demand

higher wages and better working conditions. These strikes happen because workers often face exploitation and unfair treatment. When movements arise to fight against these injustices, they lead to positive social change, improving the status of workers. Today, workers enjoy benefits such as better wages, insurance, medical leave, and legal protections. Additionally, with the rise of social media, it has become easier to protest against unfair labor practices, helping workers voice their concerns and gain support.

4. Provides Racial Equality

Have you heard about racial discrimination between whites and blacks in the USA? Similar discrimination has also occurred in India between upper-caste and lower-caste communities. Do you know what happened next? Have you seen examples of such segregation in films, news reports, or books? This inequality led to mass protests, as people fought against oppression and demanded equal civil rights. Revolts broke out in different regions, leading to movements that transformed society. As a result of these social changes, people today have the right to equal legal and social status, regardless of caste, race, or creed.

5. Protection of the Environment

Protecting the environment is essential for future generations. But what happens if we exploit nature? Think about the consequences. One immediate result of environmental exploitation is climate change which you are already experiencing today. In response, social movements have emerged to fight against environmental destruction. Various organizations have pushed for environmental protection, leading to the introduction of laws to safeguard forests, air, water, and wildlife. These efforts have helped protect endangered animals and promote eco-friendly initiatives, ensuring a healthier planet for future generations.

6. Against Corruption

We feel proud to see how fast India has developed since gaining independence. However, no matter how much progress a country makes, it becomes meaningless if corruption exists in the system. Corruption remains a serious issue in India. When corruption reaches a high level, people often rise in protest. Many times, public agitation has erupted against corrupt practices, forcing the system to become more accountable.

7. Against Human Rights Violations

Have you seen protests in the media against human rights violations? People today are more aware of these injustices, and social movements have become stronger in advocating for human rights. Social change plays a crucial role in exposing injustices and preventing harm to society. Sometimes, these changes happen violently, such as during civil wars or conflicts. However, when achieved through elections and legislation, social change tends to occur gradually, leading to long-lasting improvements.

6.1.1.1 Factors of Social Change

Certain factors influence social change in a society. Let us explore each in detail:

1. Demographic Factors

Changes in population composition can impact a society's sex ratio, which in turn affects various aspects of life, including marital status. A higher proportion of young adults can lead to rapid societal changes, whereas a society dominated by older adults may resist change and experience increased conflict. High birth rates contribute to issues such as unemployment, poverty, overpopulation, and broader social transformations. These changes affect institutions such as family, kinship, politics, and marriage. In societies with significant gender

imbalances, practices such as polyandry and polygyny have emerged. Additionally, factors beyond birth and death rates, such as migration, war, and shifting cultural norms, also play a crucial role in shaping social change.

2. Natural Factors

Natural calamities such as floods, epidemics, earthquakes, and droughts significantly impact society, often forcing people to adapt and leading to social change. These changes arise due to migration, population displacement, shifts in food production, and the destruction of flora and fauna. Such disruptions alter daily life and influence social values and norms, bringing about cultural transformations.

3. Technological Factors

Science and technology are advancing rapidly, making knowledge more accessible and increasing people's education levels and social status. This has contributed to the development of a critical mindset, where people are less likely to follow outdated customs and traditions blindly. Technological advancements, such as mechanization, make work easier and create new employment opportunities, leading to social change. Similarly, urbanization has increased social interactions by improving communication and transportation. This has facilitated cultural exchanges, making it easier for different cultural groups to interact and influence one another, resulting in significant social changes.

4. Cultural Factors

Our beliefs, institutions, values, and social relationships form the foundation of culture. Whenever these aspects change, they bring about social change, as cultural and social aspects are closely linked.



Dawson and Gettys (1948) stated, “Culture gives speed and direction to social change and determines the limit beyond which social change cannot occur.”

a. Cultural Change through Discovery and Invention

Scientific and technological advancements lead to changes within society and communities. This type of cultural development fosters social change.

b. Cultural Change through Diffusion and Borrowing

Diffusion refers to the spread of cultural traits from one group to another, while borrowing involves adopting cultural traits from different regions. An example of this is the widespread adoption of Western styles of dress and food in many parts of the world.

5. Ideational Factors

Ideas and ideologies significantly influence social change. In India, constitutional principles such as equality, fraternity, liberty, and justice have had a profound impact on society. Changing ideas lead to transformations in social, political, and economic life, shaping societal development.

6. Economic Factors

Industrialization, as a major economic factor, has revolutionized community life. Economic advancements have improved living standards and reshaped society, leading to significant social change.

7. Political Factors

Governments introduce and enforce laws that drive social change. For example, laws against child marriage, the legalization of widow remarriage, and regulations on divorce, inheritance, and succession have all contributed to social transformation.

Similarly, the abolition of untouchability has played a crucial role in shaping society. The nature of political leadership also influences the pace and direction of social change. Additionally, political decisions can impact scientific advancements, further shaping social development.

6.1.2 Sanskritisation

As the word indicates, Sanskritisation refers to the process of adopting the lifestyle and cultural practices of upper-caste groups. Prof. M.N. Srinivas introduced the term Sanskritisation in 1952 while analyzing the social and religious life of the Coorgs of South India in his book *Religion and Society*. Until the 20th century, caste was studied in terms of the Varna system, where social status was determined by heredity, pollution, and purity. However, Srinivas examined caste in terms of upward mobility. He argued that the caste system is not entirely rigid and that the position of a caste is not permanently fixed; instead, it can change over time.

Lower-caste individuals sought to elevate their social status by imitating the rituals and practices of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. A lower caste could move up in the social hierarchy within a generation or two by adopting practices such as vegetarianism and teetotalism. Srinivas defined Sanskritisation as the process through which lower-caste Hindus, tribal communities, and other social groups modify their customs, rituals, ideologies, and ways of life to align with those of the twice-born castes, aiming to acquire a higher status in the social order. In doing so, they abandoned certain practices considered impure. Although theoretically forbidden, adopting a Brahmanical way of life became possible for them. Initially, Srinivas referred to this phenomenon as *Brahmanisation*, assuming that lower castes imitated only Brahmins. However, upon further observation, he realized that they also emulated other upper castes, leading

him to replace the term Brahmanisation with Sanskritisation.

The lower-caste communities believed that their occupation, diet, and customs determined their social standing. They associated professions such as tanning, butchery, and toddy tapping, as well as the consumption of meat and the offering of animal sacrifices, with a lower societal position. Consequently, they sought to eliminate these practices from their lives to elevate their social status.

As lower-caste individuals ascended the social hierarchy, they increasingly adopted the customs and values of the upper castes, particularly those of the Brahmins. This process of Sanskritisation often reinforced conservative and patriarchal norms, imposing stricter behavioral codes on women. It is characterized as an uncritical and irrational imitation of the customs, habits, and values of higher-caste groups, particularly the Brahmins.

6.1.2.1 Features of Sanskritisation

Sanskritisation is closely linked to economic and political dominance. The dominant caste plays a significant role in cultural transmission. While political and economic power often facilitates Sanskritisation, not all economic development results in it. Even when a group attains political power, economic advancement may or may not accompany it. Several factors contribute to Sanskritisation, including economic betterment, the acquisition of political influence, education, leadership, and the aspiration to climb the social hierarchy.

6.1.2.2 Impacts of Sanskritisation

In Indian society, four major castes have traditionally been predominant: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Over time, many invaders and communities adopted

Brahmanical culture through the process of Sanskritisation. As a result, the impact of Sanskritisation on social change continues to be visible today.

In the religious sphere, lower-caste communities built temples and began performing rituals similar to those of higher castes. They appointed Brahmins or priests from their own caste to conduct religious ceremonies such as *aarti* and *bhajans*. Many of them also started wearing the sacred thread, observing fasts, and performing rituals for their children's well-being, following Brahminical customs.

In the social domain, Sanskritisation elevated the lifestyle of lower-caste communities as they sought to secure a higher position in the caste hierarchy, akin to Brahmins and Kshatriyas. This process contributed to increased social mobility, allowing individuals to improve their status by aligning their practices with those of the upper castes.

Economically, Sanskritisation influenced occupational changes among lower-caste individuals. Many began taking up higher-paying jobs and benefited from reservations in government services, helping them enhance their socio-economic standing. In contemporary society, it is not uncommon to see upper-caste individuals working under lower-caste employers, signifying a shift in traditional power dynamics.

Sanskritisation also improved the living conditions of lower-caste communities. They started building *pucca* houses with amenities similar to those enjoyed by the upper castes. Today, they share equal rights with upper-caste individuals without fear or hesitation. Moreover, they have adopted hygiene practices traditionally associated with the upper castes, such as regular bathing, wearing clean clothes, and maintaining personal cleanliness. Many lower-caste groups have also given up the consumption



of alcohol, beef, and pork as part of their attempt to assimilate into higher social ranks.

Based on these observations, M.N. Srinivas predicted that “in the next twenty or thirty years, the culture of untouchables all over the country will have undergone profound changes.” However, Sanskritisation does not automatically grant a group a higher status. Achieving social mobility through this process often requires more than one or two generations, and a caste’s claim to an elevated status may or may not be accepted, even under significant social pressure. Despite these challenges, Sanskritisation has played a significant role in driving social change.

6.1.3 Westernisation

The term *Westernisation* was introduced by Professor M.N. Srinivas to describe the adoption or imitation of Western culture, practices, and values by non-Western societies. Westernisation is considered a subprocess of modernization. According to Srinivas, modernization is often perceived as inherently positive, which is why he preferred the term *Westernisation* instead.

Srinivas defined Westernisation as “the changes brought about in Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule, encompassing transformations at different levels, including technology, institutions, ideology, and values.” He argued that technological advancements, the establishment of educational institutions, the rise of nationalism, and the emergence of a new political culture were all by-products of British rule in India.

British rule led to radical and lasting changes in Indian society, introducing new technologies, institutions, knowledge systems, beliefs, and opportunities for social mobility. As Srinivas noted, “The British laid the foundations of a modern state by surveying land, settling revenue, creating a modern bureaucracy, army, and police, codifying

laws, and developing communications such as railways, postal services, telegraphs, roads, and canals. They also established schools and colleges, significantly impacting Indian society.” Additionally, the British introduced the printing press, which played a crucial role in spreading knowledge through books and journals. Newspapers helped people across India become aware of their common bonds and understand global events.

Westernisation was often perceived as a mark of superiority, leading many to adopt Western lifestyles. This included changes in food habits, such as the consumption of alcohol and meat, as well as the incorporation of Western music and dance into celebrations. Many also embraced Western styles of dress, dining, and etiquette. The preference for English education further reflected the influence of Westernisation.

Upper-caste individuals were more likely to adopt Western ways, as they had the financial means to do so. Brahmins, for instance, accepted Western attire and embraced modern gadgets like radios, televisions, cars, and telephones. However, they largely resisted adopting British dietary habits, dancing, hunting, and other leisure activities. This distinction, however, was relative rather than absolute.

As M.N. Srinivas stated, “Unlike modernisation, the term Westernisation is ethically neutral. Westernisation implies certain value preferences, with the most significant being humanitarianism.” Humanitarianism promotes concern for the well-being of all individuals, regardless of caste, economic status, religion, age, or gender. It also encompasses values such as egalitarianism and secularism, encouraging rational thinking and a critical approach to social issues.

Westernisation played a key role in challenging traditional practices such as

child marriage, the seclusion of women, restrictions on women's education, and untouchability. These changes contributed to the rise of social reform movements, ultimately transforming Indian society.

6.1.3.1 Effects of Westernisation

Westernisation has led to economic globalization, better products, and modern facilities, improving living standards and extending life expectancy. It promotes the adoption of new norms, rationalization, egalitarianism, and secularism while influencing family structures and societal values. However, it has also widened the gap between elites and the masses and brought significant changes to institutions such as the military, civil services, and legal systems.

The adoption of Western practices and cultures, either through compulsion or influence, has shaped non-European societies, including India. The form and pace of Westernisation in India have varied from region to region and across different social groups. While Westernisation brings progress and introduces modern advancements, it also opens a window for the discovery and integration of rich cultural practices from other parts of the world.

6.1.4 Modernisation

The term Modernisation was introduced by Daniel Lerner and gained prominence in the 1950s and 1960s. It is derived from the Latin word *mode*, meaning contemporary, recent, or the latest. Modernisation involves the development of a society through knowledge and economic advancements, signifying a process of social change in which “less developed societies acquire the characteristics common to more developed societies.” It is rooted in a rationalist or positivist approach and replaces traditional methods with scientific inventions.

Modernisation is reflected in various aspects of society, including social, psychological, cultural, and economic divisions. Key components of modernisation include industrialization, urbanization, secularization, advancements in media and communication, increased literacy, the spread of education, technological innovations, and the development of a scientific mindset. It fosters national progress by improving technology, infrastructure, and cultural practices while maintaining traditional values and ethics. Modernisation also enhances healthcare, educational facilities, and economic efficiency, reducing infant mortality and death rates.

This process encourages urbanization and population migration towards cities, increasing employment opportunities and economic growth. However, it can also lead to social unrest when existing social systems fail to adapt to new aspirations and structural changes introduced by modernisation.

The term modernisation symbolizes the adoption of contemporary lifestyles and values. Historically, it referred primarily to the transition from an agricultural economy to an industrial one and the resulting effects on social norms, values, and institutions. Today, modernisation is understood as an attempt by people—especially those bound by customs and traditions—to adapt to present-day conditions, styles, and ways of life. It signifies a shift towards a scientific and technological society, affecting various aspects of life, including food habits, dress styles, speech patterns, tastes, preferences, and recreational activities.

Scientific and technological innovations have brought remarkable changes to social structures, replacing traditional ideologies with modern perspectives. According to Yogendra Singh, modernisation is a broader concept than Sanskritisation and Westernisation. He describes it as a



“cultural universal,” meaning that it applies to all societies rather than being confined to a specific region or cultural group. Modernisation represents a commitment to scientific reasoning and a firm belief in the transformative power of science to shape and improve society.

6.1.4.1 Dimensions of Modernisation

Modernisation is a complex and multifaceted process, involving various interconnected changes across different aspects of society. The process varies from country to country, depending on historical and cultural contexts. It encompasses transformations in social, economic, political, educational, technological, military, administrative, and cultural spheres. According to sociologist Neil Smelser, modernisation involves changes in the following key dimensions:

a. Agriculture

Traditional farming methods have been replaced by modern techniques driven by scientific knowledge and technology. Hand-weaving, for example, has given way to power looms, and agriculture has transitioned from subsistence farming to large-scale commercial farming, emphasizing cash crops and mechanized labor. Similarly, industries have shifted from reliance on human and animal power to the use of advanced machinery, leading to a transformation from rural, farm-based lifestyles to urban, industry-centered ones.

b. Religion

Religious ideologies have evolved, incorporating values such as patriotism, nationalism, democracy, and secularism. Additionally, extended family and kinship structures have gradually broken down into smaller, more independent units.

c. Customs

Modernisation has altered traditional customs, particularly in marriage. Personal choice has increasingly replaced parental arrangements, giving individuals greater autonomy in selecting their life partners.

d. Education

Education has undergone a significant transformation, with rising literacy rates and the widespread establishment of formal educational institutions. Mass media has become a vital tool for education and information dissemination. Additionally, new administrative structures, such as bureaucracies, have emerged across political, economic, and educational domains, shaping modern governance and organizational systems.

e. Psychological Changes

Studies by Alex Inkeles and David H. Smith have revealed that the modern individual has become an informed and active participant in society. He is highly independent and makes personal decisions regarding education, marriage, and occupation without being overly influenced by traditional norms. Modern individuals are open to new experiences and ideas, demonstrating cognitive flexibility and adaptability.

6.1.5 Modernisation in India

Modernisation in India began with the advent of British rule, significantly impacting its culture and social structure. It introduced changes in the legal system, expanded Western forms of education, promoted urbanisation and industrialisation, and spread new means of communication and transport. It also brought about social reforms and transformed systems of administration, judiciary, military, and industrial bureaucracy. New classes of business elites, entrepreneurs,

political leaders, and nationalist movements emerged, creating a modernising structure that had a uniform impact across the country.

After independence, the introduction of a federal parliamentary system ushered in new political values. Legal reforms, particularly in Hindu marriage and inheritance laws, reflected India's commitment to modernisation. Community development projects and the Panchayati Raj system fostered political awareness and encouraged participation in local governance and the administration of justice. As a result, Indian society had to learn to accommodate both tradition and modernisation simultaneously.

To achieve comprehensive modernisation, India must focus on aspects such as equality, human dignity, and social values. Efforts should be made to address gender equality, economic disparity, caste-based discrimination, and technological advancements in justice. The country has witnessed both qualitative and quantitative growth in wealth production, technical diversification, specialization, urbanization, and industrialization.

Modernisation in India touches every aspect of life—economic, political, educational, and socio-cultural. At the cultural level, the nation aspires to embrace secularism, rationalism, and liberalism. Politically, democratic institutions must drive social change through planning, legislation, and governance. Economically, modernisation involves technological advancements, the use of inanimate energy sources, labor specialization, global economic linkages, and financial support mechanisms.

6.1.5.1 Effects of Modernisation

Modernisation plays a crucial role in advancing technology and improving people's lives by providing better living conditions and educational facilities. It

encourages rational thinking and innovation, helping to eliminate social evils and foster a more progressive society. By promoting free thought and scientific approaches, modernisation enables individuals to develop broader perspectives and embrace change. It inspires creative ideas and solutions that contribute to societal advancement. Ultimately, modernisation has the potential to transform not only communities but also individual lives, enabling people to thrive in a dynamic and evolving world.

6.1.5.2 Problems of Modernisation

Sociologist Ram Ahuja identifies several major challenges associated with modernisation. One of the primary difficulties is the sudden and widespread social change, which can be difficult to implement effectively. A significant issue is the imbalance between advancements in different sectors; for instance, while mass education may expand rapidly, employment opportunities may not grow at the same pace, leading to frustration and economic instability.

Structural changes during modernisation are also often uneven, as traditional customs and beliefs continue to persist despite scientific and technological progress. This creates conflicts between modern and traditional practices, such as the ongoing debate between online education and conventional classroom learning. Additionally, cultural lag—the delay in society's adaptation to new advancements—can hinder cooperation between modernised institutions. This lag often results in unfulfilled aspirations and societal unrest.

Modernisation essentially involves the transformation of a traditional society through Westernisation. The development of science, technology, trade, and infrastructure aims to provide better living conditions and improve the overall standard of living. Beyond



material progress, modernisation also brings about economic, social, political, and cultural revolutions that shape contemporary society.

6.1.5.3 Relation between Sanskritization and Westernization

According to M.N. Srinivas, “The increase in Westernization does not retard the process of Sanskritization. Both go on simultaneously, and to some extent, an increase in Westernization accelerates the process of Sanskritization. For example, postal facilities, railways, buses, and newspapers—fruits of Western influence on India—have made organized religious pilgrimages, meetings,

and caste solidarities more feasible than in the past” (Yogendra Singh in *Modernisation of Indian Tradition*).

Modernisation and Westernisation are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings. Modernisation refers to changes occurring in the structure and functioning of individuals and institutions within society, whereas Westernisation refers specifically to changes resulting from contact with Western culture.

Indian society has traditionally been regarded as a “closed society” due to the rigidity of the caste system. However, internal social mobility has existed, particularly

Sanskritisation	Westernisation
Imposes taboos on meat consumption and alcohol	Encourages meat consumption and alcohol use
Restricts ceremonies related to marriage and divorce	Removes such restrictions through legislation, promoting gender equality, widow remarriage, and laws against child marriage
Fosters a sacred outlook	Encourages a secular outlook
Emphasizes the dominance of Sanskrit	Prioritizes Western education, particularly English-medium instruction

Table 6.1.1 Comparison of Sanskritisation and Westernisation

through the process of Sanskritisation, where lower caste groups imitate the rituals and behaviors of upper castes, especially Brahmins and Kshatriyas, in an effort to achieve upward social mobility. Meanwhile, the upper castes, including Brahmins, have increasingly adopted Western lifestyles, a phenomenon described by M.N. Srinivas as Westernisation.

Today, not only the upper and middle classes but also the broader population are adapting their behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles to align with those of developed societies. Daniel Lerner refers to this process as modernisation, which denotes social

change in which “less developed societies acquire the characteristics common to more developed societies.” The humanitarian values introduced through Westernisation contributed to social reform movements and the struggle for independence in India.

In the Indian context, cultural continuity coexists with change, shaped by the adoption of modern values, practices, and institutions. Traditional patterns are not static but evolve continuously. While Sanskritisation and Westernisation provide useful frameworks for analyzing cultural transformations, they primarily address surface-level changes and do not deeply impact the fundamental social

structure. Thus, these concepts alone are insufficient for understanding the ongoing transformation of Indian society.

6.1.6 Globalisation

The term "global" refers to something worldwide in scope, leading to the emergence of a world society. The term "globalisation" was coined in 1959 but gained widespread recognition only after the 1980s. By the late 20th century, globalisation had become a key force driving international integration. It is a social process that fosters interconnectedness among people and nations, leading to the exchange of information, ideas, knowledge, technology, and resources, ultimately transforming societies.

The early stages of globalisation were driven by advancements in transportation, including ships and railways, which facilitated economic progress. The rapid evolution of communication technologies—such as telephones, satellites, computers, and television—further accelerated the diffusion of knowledge, effectively turning the world into a "global village."

Globalisation has significantly influenced social values, contributing to broad social changes. The expansion of international trade in goods, capital, and services has fueled economic globalisation. Institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) have played a crucial role in developing global trade networks. The increasing number of job opportunities created by globalisation has also led to widespread migration, as people move across borders in search of better livelihoods. This process has transformed labor relations, economic exchanges, and political landscapes, while also reshaping cultural identities.

Globalisation manifests in three key domains:

- a. **Economic Globalisation** – Developing countries often depend on developed nations for investment and capital, shaping their economies and trade relations.
- b. **Political Globalisation** – Nations form alliances and provide each other with political and financial support, fostering international cooperation and diplomacy.
- c. **Cultural Globalisation** – Societies across the world increasingly adopt and integrate various cultural practices, traditions, and lifestyles, resulting in greater cross-cultural interactions and exchanges.

Thus, globalisation influences multiple aspects of human life, reshaping economies, politics, and cultures on a global scale.

6.1.6.1 Characteristics of Globalisation

Globalisation is a universal but non-uniform process that drives social change by linking people, cities, and nations worldwide. It is both a developmental and disruptive force, accelerating societal transformations while presenting challenges.

As a multidimensional and ongoing phenomenon, globalisation transcends time and space, fostering connections and enabling the exchange of ideas, commodities, and information. Economically, it promotes a borderless world, characterized by liberalisation, free trade, and expanded economic activities. This process of dispersion and diffusion ensures significant societal shifts, making globalisation an irreversible force that continues to shape the modern world.



6.1.6.2 Effects of Globalisation on Indian Society

India is developing rapidly, and globalisation has significantly impacted its political, cultural, social, and economic sectors. Financial integration is among the most prominent effects of globalisation, influencing even the most remote areas of the country. The impact of globalisation has occurred at different rates across various fields. Below is a detailed analysis of its effects on multiple sectors:

1. **Industrial Sector** Globalisation has modernised India's industrial sector by facilitating foreign collaborations and investments. For instance, large-scale infrastructure projects, including road construction, often receive foreign aid. India has become a favored offshore market for industries such as healthcare, chemicals, and petroleum. The introduction of new technologies, such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and biotechnology, has intensified advancements in science and technology, leading to significant organisational, institutional, and infrastructural changes.
2. **Financial Sector** Globalisation has advanced India's financial sector, boosting international investments and increasing the inflow of remittances from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). The privatisation of financial institutions has introduced competition, leading to improved financial services and enhanced economic growth.
3. **Social Sector** Globalisation has brought about significant changes in Indian society. It has led to the adoption of Western lifestyles, including fast food, fashion, and entertainment. This has resulted in a more cosmopolitan and modern society. However, it has also led to the erosion of traditional values and customs. The increasing exposure to global media and culture has created a sense of global citizenship among Indians.
4. **Cultural Impact** Globalisation has transformed Indian culture by increasing connectivity through mass media and entertainment. Advanced technological devices, including smartphones, have become widespread in both rural and urban areas, bridging the digital divide. Western influences are evident in food habits, clothing styles, and daily routines. This transformation has also influenced traditional customs, such as festive celebrations and marriage practices. Large shopping malls, high-rise buildings, and the growing presence of multinational corporations reflect the ongoing cultural shift. Additionally, exposure to foreign movies and entertainment has reshaped India's media landscape. One of the significant cultural changes brought about by globalisation is the shift in gender dynamics. Women now have greater access to education and employment opportunities, contributing to increased gender equality. However, globalisation has also led to challenges, such as the commercialization of traditions and cultural homogenisation.

5. Education Sector Globalisation has led to significant expansion and standardisation in India's education sector, resulting in higher literacy rates. The internationalisation of higher education has increased student mobility, with Indian students studying abroad and foreign students enrolling in Indian universities. The education sector has also become more privatised, leading to qualitative improvements in content, methodology, and pedagogy. Technological advancements have revolutionised education through online learning, e-learning platforms, and distance education programmes, making education more accessible regardless of geographical barriers. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasises international standards in vocational, technical, and professional education to meet global demands.

6. Social Sector Globalisation has fostered social cohesion by improving employment opportunities, working conditions, income levels, and social security. Increased mobility has enabled people to travel and work in different regions, broadening their exposure to diverse cultures. The impact on women has been both positive and negative. On the one hand, women have gained access to multinational job opportunities, enhancing their role in economic and social progress. On the other hand, some women face exploitation through low-wage or unpaid labor, poor working conditions, and unstable employment, highlighting the ongoing struggle for gender equality in a patriarchal society.

Globalisation has also altered traditional concepts of marriage, encouraging inter-community and inter-class unions. Additionally, the rise of international institutions such as the European Union (EU), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the G8 has influenced national decision-making, reducing the autonomy of individual nations.

While globalisation has promoted secularism and tolerance, it has also widened the social gap between developed and developing countries. Furthermore, it has contributed to challenges such as human trafficking, environmental degradation, and poverty, underscoring the complex impact of globalisation on Indian society.

6.1.6.3 Challenges of Globalisation

While globalisation has driven economic growth and international integration, it also presents several challenges and risks. Maintaining a free and open transnational market is complex, often increasing interdependence among nations and reducing their self-sufficiency. The economic gap between underdeveloped and developing nations remains significant, and rapid industrialisation has exacerbated environmental issues such as carbon dioxide emissions, climate change, ozone depletion, biodiversity loss, and the accumulation of hazardous waste.

Although globalisation encourages investment in developing countries, it often shifts the taxation burden onto individuals. Economic instability in one country can trigger ripple effects across global markets, causing financial uncertainty. Job insecurities have risen, and many laborers struggle due to a lack of adequate skills and training, making them vulnerable in the competitive employment market.

Social concerns such as cultural



degradation, brain drain, and rising unemployment pose further challenges. Additionally, the rise in cybercrimes, terrorism, and unhealthy behaviors, such as increased smoking and alcohol consumption, have negatively impacted society. These adverse effects contribute to social conflicts, loss of cultural identity, and widespread dissatisfaction, making sustainable development and global harmony more difficult to achieve.

6.1.6.4 De-Globalisation

The term “de-globalisation” refers to the process of reducing interdependence and integration among nations, leading to a decline in international trade, investment, and cooperation. This shift often results in the withdrawal from global organisations and agreements, signaling a retreat from worldwide interconnectedness.

Several factors contribute to de-globalisation, including civil wars, stringent government regulations, pandemics such as COVID-19, economic constraints like banking crises, and migration or refugee

crises. These events can prompt nations to focus inward, prioritising national interests over global cooperation.

In contrast, globalisation represents a long-term shift toward increased economic, political, cultural, and technological integration. Advances in communication and transportation have accelerated this process, allowing for the smooth exchange of people, goods, capital, and information across borders.

In India, globalisation has significantly transformed social, industrial, economic, and cultural systems. It has promoted free trade, improved transportation infrastructure, and encouraged the expansion of multinational corporations. While its effects vary across regions, even remote areas have felt its impact through increased production, higher export volumes, and the widespread availability of goods and services both online and offline. Despite the challenges, globalisation continues to shape the modern world, creating both opportunities and obstacles in its path.

Recap

- ◆ The three primary triggers for social change are conflict, demographic, and cultural change.
- ◆ Cultural change occurs through discovery and invention.
- ◆ Diffusion and borrowing impact on cultural change.
- ◆ The term “westernisation” was introduced by Professor M N Srinivas.
- ◆ Media helped the people living in remote corners of the country to realize their common bonds and to understand the events happening in the world outside.
- ◆ The term modernization was introduced by Daniel Lerner and gained prevalence in the 1950s and 1960s.

- ◆ The term “modernization” symbolizes a process indicating the adoption of modern life and values.
- ◆ Globalization is a social process which results in the interconnectedness and integration of people and nations across borders.
- ◆ Globalization aids in the unification into single society and homogenises prices, products, wages, interest rates and profits through technological, commercial and cultural synchronization.

Objective Questions

1. What are the three main triggers of social change?
2. What natural changes affect the normal life of people?
3. Who introduced the concept of Sanskritisation?
4. Who introduced the concept of modernisation?
5. What is the meaning of the term modernisation?
6. "The process of reducing interdependence and integration among nations, leading to a decline in trade, investment and cooperation" is termed as what?
7. What factors contribute to modernisation in Indian society?

Answers

1. Conflict, demographic change, and cultural change
2. Natural calamities such as floods, epidemics, earthquakes, and droughts affect the normal life of a society
3. M.N. Srinivas
4. Daniel Lerner
5. The term “modernization” symbolizes a process that involves adopting modern life and values
6. De-globalization
7. Technology

Assignments

1. Write an essay on the directions of social change in India.
2. Discuss social change and explain its factors.
3. Explain Sanskritisation from the perspective of the caste system in India.
4. Briefly explain Westernisation in India.
5. Define modernisation and describe its dimensions.
6. Explain globalisation and discuss its effects on Indian society.

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UNIT

Social Movements in India: Nature and Types

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ analyse the characteristics of Dalit, Peasant, Women, and Ethnic movements
- ◆ understand ethnicity in India and its various movements
- ◆ explain the peasant movement and its effect on India

Prerequisites

India is a diverse country in terms of caste and religion. You may have heard about *Varnashrama Dharma* and the division of labor in society. Historically, the upper caste dominated the lower caste in social, political, and economic aspects. Mahatma Gandhi introduced the term *Harijans*, meaning “people of God,” to refer to these marginalized groups.

Despite differences in labor, customs, manners, traditions, and beliefs, they were collectively called *Dalits*. Dalits have been socially deprived and often live in slum areas, facing severe economic hardships. They have historically been subjected to social and economic exploitation in various ways. To uplift these disadvantaged communities, the government has implemented several initiatives.

Dalits frequently struggle with poverty and issues such as alcoholism. Many live in poor conditions and have limited access to proper food and hygiene. They also face challenges such as domestic violence and social discrimination. The continuous oppression by the upper caste led to frustration, ultimately giving rise to various movements. In an effort to improve their status in society, Dalits have sought upward mobility through *Sanskritization* and *modernization*. These

large-scale efforts to challenge social inequality and assert their rights are known as *Dalit movements*. Now, let us explore the details of social movements.

Keywords

Dalits, Civil movements, Rights, Peasants, Women, Ethnic

Discussion

India consists of various castes, traditionally based on occupations. A person's status was historically determined by their caste. The term *Dalit* is derived from the Sanskrit root *dal*, meaning “to split,” “break,” or “crack.” Jyotiba Phule, the founder of the Satya Shodhak Samaj in 1873—a non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra—is believed to have coined the term *Dalit*. He used it to refer to outcastes and untouchables, recognizing them as victims of India's caste-based social division.

Dalits were considered socially deprived individuals belonging to the lower caste. They often lived in slum areas, working in servitude and enduring the restrictions imposed by the upper castes. The introduction of Western ideas, values, freedom of thought, legal equality, and modern technology created an intellectual and psychological shift that significantly changed their status in India.

Mahatma Gandhi referred to Dalits as *Harijans*, meaning “people of God.” However, B.R. Ambedkar rejected this term, as he advocated for a separate electorate for the depressed classes and proposed the term Protestant Hindus instead. In 1935, the British government officially defined them as the Scheduled Castes. It was during the

1970s that the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra popularized the term *Dalit*.

Oppression and discrimination have led to poverty and various social challenges among Dalits. Many converted to other religions—such as Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism—seeking equality and human dignity. Today, the term *Dalit* is used to refer to marginalized communities across different religions and social protest movements.

6.2.1 Social Movements

Social movements are collective efforts by groups of people aimed at initiating or resisting social change. They emerge when individuals with common grievances or aspirations challenge existing power structures, institutions, and social norms. Social movements are marked by their organized nature, shared ideologies, and sustained efforts toward specific goals. These movements vary in scale, from local grassroots initiatives to global campaigns.

A key characteristic of social movements is solidarity, where people unite for a common cause—often advocating for justice, equality, or the recognition of fundamental rights.

6.2.1.1 Nature and Characteristics of Social Movements

Social movements are inherently collective actions—they are not individual efforts but arise from solidarity among like-minded people. They often lack formal structures, distinguishing them from established institutions. This flexibility allows them to adapt to changing social conditions, shifting political landscapes, and technological advancements.

Social movements are interconnected with cultural, economic, and environmental issues, making them dynamic and complex. Their common characteristics include:

1. Collective Action

One of the defining features of social movements is collective action. Unlike individual efforts, social movements involve large groups of people working together toward a shared goal. Their strength lies in their ability to mobilize diverse groups and challenge deeply entrenched power structures.

A strong example of this is the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which relied on mass protests, marches, and boycotts to drive social change. The success of any movement depends on its ability to unite people behind a common cause.

2. Shared Ideology

At the heart of every social movement is a unifying ideology or vision. This ideology helps participants understand the issues at hand and directs their collective efforts toward achieving specific goals.

For instance, the feminist movement is driven by the belief in gender equality and the dismantling of patriarchal structures. A shared ideology fosters a sense of purpose and unity, motivating members to persist in the face of challenges.

3. Organized Structure

While social movements may appear spontaneous, they typically have some level of organization. This can range from informal networks to highly structured organizations with defined leadership roles.

Leaders play a crucial role in coordinating activities, mobilizing resources, and keeping the movement focused. For example, the labour movement often relies on trade unions as formal structures to negotiate for workers' rights. Effective organization enables social movements to navigate complex and ever-changing environments.

4. Continuity Over Time

Social movements do not occur at a single moment; rather, they sustain themselves over extended periods, allowing them to build a strong foundation and gain broader support. This continuity is essential for achieving long-term goals, as meaningful social change requires sustained effort.

For example, the environmental movement has evolved over several decades, focusing on various aspects of ecological conservation and climate change. Long-lasting movements have the flexibility to adapt their strategies based on changing social and political landscapes.

5. Change-Oriented Goals

The primary aim of social movements is to bring about change, which can be reformative, revolutionary, or resistive:

Reformative movements seek to bring change within the existing system. For instance, the LGBTQ+ rights movement advocates for equal rights, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Revolutionary movements aim to transform society's fundamental structures. A historical example is the French Revolution, which sought to overthrow the monarchy

and establish a new political order. Resistive movements seek to prevent perceived undesirable changes. An example is the opposition to globalization, where protestors resist economic policies that may threaten local industries and cultures. The specific goals of a movement shape its strategies and methods of action.

6. Use of Tactics and Strategies

Social movements employ a wide range of tactics, from peaceful demonstrations to more confrontational actions. Nonviolent methods include petitions, marches, awareness campaigns, and social media activism. Direct action tactics, such as strikes, sit-ins, and acts of civil disobedience, can be used to exert pressure on authorities.

The choice of tactics depends on the movement's objectives, available resources, and the political climate. For instance, during India's struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent resistance emphasized peaceful protest as a moral and effective strategy for achieving change.

7. Relationship to the Broader Social Context

Social movements are deeply influenced by the societal, cultural, and political environments in which they emerge. Factors such as economic inequality, political oppression, technological advancements, and cultural shifts often act as catalysts for these movements.

For example, modern movements like *MeToo* and *Black Lives Matter* have been significantly shaped by digital platforms, enabling them to gain global visibility and support. This interconnectedness allows movements to address multiple issues simultaneously, making them more inclusive and impactful.

6.2.2 Dalit Movement

Historically, Dalits received little to no support from the British colonial rulers or early social reformers. The British were largely indifferent to Dalit issues in the 19th century, and the administrative changes they introduced were not specifically aimed at improving Dalit welfare. As a result, Dalits remained socially, economically, culturally, and politically marginalized.

Due to societal pressure, many Dalits were forced to accept their position at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. However, those who resisted caste-based oppression sought to improve their social standing. Their collective frustration led them to unite and organize movements demanding equality and justice. These mass efforts became known as Dalit movements.

Dalit movements in India have emerged as a response to caste-based discrimination, social exclusion, and systemic oppression. Their primary objectives include achieving equality, dignity, and justice for Dalits, who have historically faced marginalization. Several factors have contributed to the rise and growth of these movements, including historical, social, political, economic, and ideological influences.

6.2.2.1 Factors of Dalit Movements

1. Historical Factors

Caste-based Discrimination: The rigid caste system has led to the exclusion of Dalits from mainstream society, prompting resistance and mobilization.

Colonial Influence: British rule introduced new legal frameworks, education, and employment opportunities, which helped Dalits organize themselves.

Social Reform Movements: Efforts by social reformers like Jyotirao Phule,



Periyar, and others laid the foundation for Dalit assertion.

2. Social Factors

Untouchability and Social Exclusion: Practices such as segregation, denial of temple entry, and restrictions on public resources fueled Dalit resistance.

Education and Awareness: Increased literacy and awareness of rights empowered Dalits to challenge caste oppression.

Cultural Assertion: Dalits have used literature, art, and festivals to reclaim their identity and challenge Brahminical dominance.

3. Political Factors

Leadership of B.R. Ambedkar: His role in drafting the Indian Constitution and advocating for Dalit rights inspired various movements.

Political Representation: Reservation policies and the formation of Dalit political parties (e.g., BSP) have strengthened Dalit voices.

Government Policies: Laws such as the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act have influenced Dalit movements.

4. Economic Factors

Landlessness and Poverty: The lack of land ownership and economic dependence on upper castes have been major causes of Dalit struggles.

Industrialization and Urbanization: Migration to cities has provided Dalits with opportunities outside traditional caste-based occupations.

Reservation in Jobs: Affirmative action in public sector jobs has contributed to Dalit empowerment.

5. Ideological Factors

Dalit-Bahujan Ideology: Thinkers like Kanshi Ram promoted unity among marginalized communities to challenge caste hierarchies.

Religious Conversion Movements: Many Dalits embraced Buddhism (as led by Ambedkar) and other religions to escape caste-based oppression.

Human Rights and Global Influence: International Dalit rights advocacy and UN recognition of caste discrimination have influenced movements.

Dalit movements have evolved over time, from early resistance against untouchability to contemporary struggles for social justice, political power, and economic upliftment. They continue to play a crucial role in shaping Indian society and democracy.

6.2.3 Different Dalit Movements

The Dalit movement in India is a socio-political and cultural struggle against caste-based oppression and discrimination. It emerged as a response to the deep-rooted inequalities of the caste system, particularly the practice of untouchability, and aimed to secure equality, dignity, and justice for Dalits. The movement has evolved through various phases, adopting different ideologies and strategies to challenge caste-based exclusion.

Ghanshyam Shah classified Dalit movements into reformative and alternative movements. Reformative movements aim to reform the caste system by addressing the problems faced by untouchables, while alternative movements seek to create a new socio-cultural background through religious conversion, education, economic upliftment, and political power.

Reformative movements are further divided into Bhakti, neo-Vedantic, and Sanskritization movements. Alternative

movements are categorized into conversion movements and religious or secular movements. Dalit movements have also been classified based on caste and class distinctions. The Bahujan Samaj is considered a new Dalit political movement.

In the Bhakti movement, two traditions were followed: Saguna and Nirguna. The Saguna tradition believes in a personal God, Varnashrama Dharma, and the caste social order, while the Nirguna tradition believes in a formless God. The Nirguna tradition became more popular among Dalits as it promised salvation and social equity for all.

6.2.3.1 Neo-Vedantic Movement

This movement was initiated by Hindu religious and social reformers. Organizations such as Arya Samaj, Satya Shodhak Samaj, the Self-Respect Movement, Adi Dharma, Adi Andhra, and the Adi Hindu movement in Uttar Pradesh worked towards the reformation of untouchable communities. Some Dalits who improved their economic condition aspired to move up in the caste hierarchy by adopting Sanskritic norms and rituals to claim a higher social status.

In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, strong movements emerged against untouchability. In Kerala, Dalits demanded the Temple Entry Proclamation in 1920. In the 1930s, Dalits sought a separate electorate, land from authorities, and reservations in government jobs and political positions. Ambedkar preferred Buddhism over Hinduism as it was casteless.

Additionally, marginalized communities gravitated towards modernity and Marxism, resisting Brahmanical ideology. The origin of untouchability can be traced back to the Aryan invasion around 1500 BCE, when indigenous people were often considered inferior. Historically, Dalits engaged in agricultural labor along with traditional

occupations, suffering from poverty and social exclusion. Due to a lack of awareness, many Dalits accepted upper-caste domination.

Numerous social reformers worked towards the upliftment of Dalits, striving to secure equal status for them in society. Various reform movements undertaken by Dalits themselves have significantly contributed to their empowerment, collectively known as the Dalit movement.

6.2.3.2 Major Leaders of the Dalit Movement

Jyotirao Phule (1827–1890)

- ◆ Pioneer of Dalit and OBC rights.
- ◆ Established *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Truth Seekers' Society).
- ◆ Promoted education for Dalits and women.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956)

- ◆ Architect of the Indian Constitution.
- ◆ Championed reservations in education, jobs, and politics for Dalits.
- ◆ Led the Buddhist conversion movement.
- ◆ Advocated for separate electorates for Dalits (Poona Pact, 1932).

Periyar E.V. Ramasamy (1879–1973)

- ◆ Leader of the Self-Respect Movement.
- ◆ Opposed Brahminical dominance and gender inequality.
- ◆ Championed atheism and rationalism.



6.2.4 The Peasant Movements

Agriculture is the backbone of India's economy. The land used for agriculture was historically controlled by landlords. After Independence, the Indian government introduced five-year plans for agricultural development and implemented the Green Revolution to increase crop production. Financial support was provided to landowners through subsidies, loans, and other means. However, these policies largely benefited large landowners and did not support small and marginal farmers. This led to farmer suicides, constant oppression, exploitation, and worsening conditions for many farmers, which in turn gave rise to peasant movements.

Peasant movements began even during British rule and emerged as revolts from time to time. Peasants played a crucial role in civil rebellions, often led by Zamindars and chieftains, as seen in the Revolt of 1857. Another issue was related to religious beliefs, as peasants openly opposed the new Zamindars, landlords, and moneylenders, regardless of their religion. Ultimately, they clashed with British political and economic domination, leading to widespread peasant movements.

A peasant earns income from the land he owns. In academic literature, agriculturists, landowners, tenants, and landless laborers dependent on agriculture are categorized as peasants. From the mid-1980s, scholars started using the term "farmer" instead of "peasant," as they became producers for the market while also purchasing agricultural inputs, according to Ghanshyam Shah. Jan Breman defines a peasant as "one who tills the land." Peasants engage in agriculture or related production with primitive tools and surrender part of their produce to landlords or state agents. Peasants were subservient to landlords, making their position in society clear.

A peasant movement is defined as a relatively organized and continuous collective action, sometimes involving violence, aimed at securing a greater share in the control or ownership of land and its produce and eliminating injustices associated with it.

6.2.4.1 Various Peasant Movements in India

Several peasant movements took place in India, such as the Indigo Rebellion (1859-1862), Pabna Movement (1870s-1880s), Agrarian League (1873), and Deccan Riots (1875) during the pre-Gandhian period. Gandhian peasant movements began in the 1920s. Rural sociologists have referred to these as peasant struggles, uprisings, and revolutions. Over time, agricultural production became surplus-oriented, turning agriculture into a capitalist activity. This transformation improved the situation of peasants to some extent, but it also led to changing relations between peasants and agricultural laborers. Now, let us discuss some significant peasant movements.

1. Champaran Satyagraha

The peasants of Champaran suffered immensely under European planters, landlords, and government officials. Gandhiji experimented with the non-cooperation movement by leading the Champaran (Bihar) and Kheda (Gujarat) peasant struggles during India's independence movement. The primary objective was to mobilize the peasants and help them achieve their demands. The Champaran peasant movement was launched in 1917-1918.

Causes of the Champaran Peasant Struggle:

- ◆ The peasants of Champaran faced severe hardships under the oppressive conditions imposed by landlords and European planters.

- ◆ Land rents were raised to exorbitant levels, imposing a heavy financial burden on the peasants.
- ◆ They were forced to grow indigo on the most fertile parts of their land, restricting their ability to cultivate other crops.
- ◆ Despite their labor, the wages paid to them were meager and insufficient for survival.
- ◆ The peasants lived in extreme poverty and endured miserable conditions under this exploitative system.

The movement turned violent due to the Chauri Chaura incident. The Champaran struggle is considered part of the national movement, and peasants were tortured for refusing to pay excessive rents. The ideology of non-violence provided strength to the peasants participating in the movement. The Champaran Agrarian Act was approved by the Governor-General of India on May 1, 1918.

2. Kheda Peasant Struggle

Kheda, located in the central part of Gujarat, was highly fertile and suitable for cultivating tobacco and cotton. The peasantry of Kheda mainly consisted of educated Patidars, known for their agricultural expertise.

Causes of the Kheda Struggle:

- ◆ The government imposed excessive taxes on Kheda land after reassessing it based on crop production, despite the severe famine that led to widespread crop failure.
- ◆ This created immense hardship for the peasants, who were already struggling to survive.
- ◆ Despite their suffering, the government insisted on collecting

land taxes, further worsening their condition.

Gandhiji encouraged satyagraha after the Gujarat Sabha's petition for suspending revenue assessment was rejected by the government. The Kheda Satyagraha began in March 1919 under the leadership of Gandhiji, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, N.M. Joshi, and several others. This movement followed the same principles as the Champaran movement, emphasizing non-violence.

Government officials issued notices for fines and penalties, seized the peasants' cattle, took possession of their houses, and confiscated their movable property due to non-payment of land tax. However, the movement eventually succeeded when the government accepted the primary demands of the peasants, leading to its termination.

It was decided that the wealthy Patidar peasants would pay the land rent, while the poor peasants were granted remissions. Due to this decision, the small and poor peasants, who were the majority, were highly satisfied. The movement created awareness among the peasants about their rights and demands. Additionally, the peasants indirectly became involved in the struggle for independence. The success of the movement also had a significant impact on the peasants of Gujarat and neighboring states.

During the British Raj, in the state of Gujarat, the year 1925 witnessed severe floods and famine, which badly affected crops. This situation caused great financial distress among farmers.

3. The Bardoli Movement

The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1925 in Gujarat was a major episode of civil disobedience during the Indian independence movement under British rule. It was led by Vallabhbhai Patel, who adopted a non-violent approach to protest against the government, along



with leaders such as Narahari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohanlal Pandya. They divided Bardoli into several zones, each with a leader and volunteers. Patel reassured the peasants that the struggle would not end until all taxes were canceled and all seized property and lands were returned to their rightful owners.

Causes of the Bardoli Movement:

Without considering the requests and petitions of civic groups regarding the calamities in the Taluka, the Government of Bombay Presidency increased the tax rate by 30 percent. Narahari Parikh, Ravi Shankar Vyas, and Mohanlal Pandya sought the help of the prominent Gujarati freedom fighter Vallabhbhai Patel. However, the Governor of Bombay rejected Patel's appeal. In response, Patel instructed the farmers of Bardoli to refuse to pay taxes.

The government attempted to suppress the revolt by deploying Pathans to seize the property of villagers. The Pathans and tax inspectors entered farmers' houses, auctioning their lands and homes. However, no one from Gujarat or the rest of India stepped forward to buy them. Vallabhbhai Patel's volunteers closely monitored the officials responsible for the auctions. Whenever volunteers signaled the arrival of officials, the villagers would hide in nearby jungles. As a result, the officials often found entire villages empty and were unable to determine the owners of the properties.

Effects of the Bardoli Movement:

The Bardoli Satyagraha received significant support, with Indian members of the Bombay Legislative Council resigning from their positions to back the protesting farmers. As a result of the movement, the government agreed to restore the seized property, cancel the revenue payments, and defer the 30 percent tax increase until

the following year. It was during this Satyagraha that Vallabhbhai Patel earned the title "Sardar," marking his rise as a prominent leader in India's freedom struggle. The movement not only raised awareness about legal rights but also inspired other Satyagrahas, fostering organized resistance against exploitation and oppression.

4. Moplah Rebellion

The Moplahs were Muslim peasants settled in the Malabar region of Kerala. They came from diverse social and economic backgrounds—some were traders, merchants, agriculturists, and tenants of landlords, while others were warriors under the Nayars.

The Moplah Peasant Movement began in August 1921. During this time, British officials, in alliance with Hindu landlords known as Jenmis, oppressed the Moplah peasants. Most of their grievances were related to security of tenure, high rents, renewal fees, and other unjust exactions imposed by landlords.

Causes of the Moplah Rebellion:

The Moplah agitation was a peasant struggle against the exploitative practices of Hindu landlords (Jenmis), who charged exorbitant renewal fees and high exactions. The sudden expulsion of Moplahs from their lands without prior notice created insecurity among them. Additionally, discrimination against Moplah tenants in comparison to Hindu tenants fueled their grievances. Inspired by the Khilafat movement, tensions escalated when the arrest of Khilafat leader Ali Musaliar and police firing on unarmed crowds led to violent clashes. In retaliation, government offices were destroyed, records were burned, and the treasury was plundered.

The targets of the Moplah rebellion included Jenmis, police stations, treasuries, administrative offices, and British planters. Due to the continuous attacks by the Moplahs

on Hindu Jenmis, the movement took on a communal character. The communalization of the peasant agitation led to a loss of sympathy among the people of Malabar. Eventually, by December 1921, the British crushed the movement.

Reasons for the Failure of the Moplah Movement:

- a. The movement took on a communal character since the landlords were predominantly Hindu, leading to communal riots.
- b. The Moplahs resorted to violence as a method of agitation, which weakened their cause.
- c. The movement failed to motivate neighboring peasantry to take up arms against oppressive landlords.

5. Tebhaga Movement in Bengal

Word “Tebhaga” literally means three shares of harvests. There was a constant oppression and exploitation by the rich farmers and a domination of the feudal lords over the lands and there was an unequal distribution of lands in India. Hence the sharecroppers demanded two-thirds for themselves and one-third for the landlord instead of previous fifty-fifty share of the produce on their tenancy.

The crop sharing system at that time was known as barga, adhi, bhagietc and the share croppers were called as bargadars or adhikars. These share croppers challenged the custom of sharing crops between bargadar and the landlord in 1946-47. During the harvest of 1946, the share croppers of Bengal went to fields and cut down crops and thrashed them on their own.

There were two reasons why this action led to the revolution on the part of the share croppers.

First they demanded that the sharing of the produce into half was not justified since labours and major amount is investigating by the tenants

Secondly the tenants have to store their grains at the granary of the landlord and had to share the straw and other by-products of the grains on half sharing basis. But the tenants were not ready to accept the rule. They demanded that the stock of the harvest would be stored at the tenant’s compound and they do not share byproducts.

The Bengal provincial Krishak Sabha organized the movement of Tebhaga against the landlords but they refused to accept the demands of the tenants. Due to the complaint of landlords, police arrested tenants. This agitated them and a new slogan arouse to abolish Zamindari system and to reduce the rate of the rents. Also they establish a Tebhaga committee; their areas in different districts led the government to introduce a bill in Legislative Assembly which proposes to reform the Bhagi system of the country which caused the agrarian unrest.

Reason for Failure of Tebhaga Movement:

- ◆ Due to certain political developments, the government could not enact the bill into law.
- ◆ The promises of the new government and the partition of Bengal led to the suspension of the Tebhaga movement.

Effects of the Tebhaga Movement:

Forty percent of the sharecropping produce was granted to tenants by landowners under the Tebhaga rights. Additionally, the

unlawful imposition of extra levies, known as Abwabs, was abolished. The movement achieved significant success in the districts of East Bengal, leading to the enactment of the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1950, which was a direct outcome of this movement's efforts.

6.2.5 Women's Movement

This movement is not a single or unified movement or entity but is based on a wide range of issues aimed at the emancipation of women. According to Rajendra Singh, for the theoretical study of the women's movement and its strategy, we must consider the resistance and protest against unjust structures of power and patriarchal oppression of women. When there is conscious resistance, it passes through open signs of resistance and latent phases. These signs of resistance and latency determine the methods, strategies, and techniques adopted by women to fight for their identity, dignity, self-defense, and social justice.

- ◆ Reformation of public life, the educational sphere, the workplace, and the home, thereby leading to the total reformation of society.
- ◆ It is a conscious and collective movement that tries to address a set of problems and needs specific to women, which are created by a socio-cultural system that puts them at a disadvantage.
- ◆ To oppose the erosion of identity at an individual level.

The women's movement may remain dormant in terms of organized movements but active at the individual level, making conscious use of methods such as arts, ruses, and moves against men to cope with day-to-day situations of oppression.

For any organized open movement, it must pass through different stages of maturation,

which include sharing experiences from individuals in similar life situations and observable resistance, which then becomes an external issue. From this, an ideology emerges that rejects negatively defined authority, leadership, mobilization, and communication. The focus then shifts to women's identity, consciousness, subjectivity, and the bio-psychological foundations of their personality.

6.2.5.1 Women's Movement in India

It became a social reform movement in the nineteenth century. The movement is not as strong compared to Western movements. Here, the struggle of women against patriarchal oppression and injustice is very weak and continues even today, although it is reflected in literary writings. The Western ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity were imbibed by the educated elite through the study of English. However, these ideas did not translate into an organized struggle for selfhood and survival. The movements remained latent, even though there were feelings of deprivation and anger against injustices. The women's movement in India can be seen as forming three "waves":

- ◆ The first wave was the mass mobilization of women for participation in the nationalist movement. Thereafter, for over a decade, there was a lull in political activities by women.
- ◆ The late 1960s saw a resurgence in women's political activity, which can be called the second wave.
- ◆ In the late 1970s, the third wave of the women's movement emerged, focusing on women's empowerment.

6.2.5.2 Pre-Independence

Women's Movements

A) The First Wave of Women's Movement

Readings of texts—religious, political, cultural, social-oral stories, mythology, folklore, fables, songs, jokes, proverbs, and sayings—reveal that women's subordination has existed in different forms throughout Indian history, though it was irregular. We can see such movements against oppression in the deeds of Razia Sultana, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, Ahilyabai Holkar, Muktabai, and others. Many women from various castes joined the egalitarian Bhakti movement, where saints stood for equal rights for men and women, resulting in social freedom for women against the drudgery and restrictions of domestic life. Mirabai, Akkamahadevi, and Janaki became leading poetesses. Indian culture became accessible to women, and the worship of goddesses indirectly raised the status of women.

B) The Social Reform Movement and Women

Two progressive movements recognized the restrictive and coercive nature of social customs and institutions and aimed at liberating Indian women.

One group opposed customs and institutions as they contradicted the democratic principles of liberty and freedom. This group was called the Reformers. The other group demanded the democratization of social relations and the removal of harmful practices based on the revival of Vedic society in modern India, which, according to them, was democratic. This group came to be known as the Revivalists.

The social reformers believed in the principles of individual liberty, freedom, and

equality for all human beings, irrespective of sex, color, race, caste, or religion. They attacked a number of traditional, authoritarian, and hierarchical social institutions and launched social reform movements to liberate Indian women from their shackles. Reformers like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Maharishi Karve, and Raja Ram Mohan Roy aimed at improving the status of Indian women and played a great role in eradicating social evils such as Sati, child marriage, polygamy, purdah, widow remarriage restrictions, lack of education, and the devadasi system.

Maharishi Karve showed great concern for widow remarriage and set an example by marrying a widow after the death of his first wife. He revived the Widow Remarriage Association and started the Hindu Widow's Home. He worked to improve the education levels of girls and widows by establishing Kane Women's University. His efforts in the movement to liberate Indian women are of great significance, and his extensive and successful work brought about a change in people's attitudes toward widows. As a result of these social reform movements, a number of institutions and organizations were established. They are:

1. The Gujarat Vernacular Society (1848)

The aim of this institute was to reduce large-scale illiteracy and superstitious beliefs concerning women in Gujarati society through education. It started several co-educational schools and published literature on women's issues in the vernacular press. It also organized elocution competitions and provided a platform for women to discuss their issues and problems.

2. The Deccan Education Society (1884)

This society established girls' schools and encouraged the education of women in Maharashtra.



3. Ramakrishna Mission (1897)

This mission set up homes for widows and schools for girls. It also provided refuge for invalid and destitute women, prenatal and postnatal care for women, and training for women to become midwives.

4. The Arya Samaj (1875)

It emphasized women's education. Girls received instruction in home science, domestic affairs, religious ceremonies, fine arts, etc. It also provided shelter to distressed women during difficult times.

5. The Hingne Women's Education Institute (1896)

This institute aimed to meet the educational and vocational needs of women, whether married, unmarried, or widowed. It sought to prevent early marriage by training young unmarried girls in various fields and providing skills and education to married women to help them manage domestic life efficiently and economically. It also offered training to widows to make them financially independent.

6. S.N.D.T. Women's University

This university was established exclusively for women to fulfill the need for higher education for women. It provided education in the mother tongue.

7. The Seva Sadan (1908)

This organization brought together enlightened women from different communities for the upliftment of backward women. Its main activities included providing social and medical aid to women and children from poor backgrounds, irrespective of caste or creed. It established homes for destitute and distressed women and children and offered training in domestic crafts to

enable poor women to earn a livelihood. It emphasized the all-round development of a woman's personality and stressed economic self-sufficiency.

8. The Indian National Social Conference

This organization addressed issues such as child marriage, the sale of young girls, polygamy, access to education for women, and widow remarriage.

9. All India Women's Conference

This organization focused on women's education, the welfare of women and children, and social reforms. It also worked to eliminate early marriage, polygamy, and restrictions on divorce. Additionally, it advocated for women's property rights, improved working conditions for women, and opposed the immoral trafficking of women and children, as well as the inhumane Devadasi system.

6.2.5.3 Post-Independence

Women's Movements in India (The Second Wave)

The post-independence movement demanded gender equality and challenged the gender-based division of labor and the oppressive nature of the patriarchal structure. Various movements emerged, raising issues such as land rights, wages, job security, equality, population policies, and atrocities against women, including rape and alcohol-related violence.

After independence, while framing the Constitution, the Government of India emphasized equality between men and women in all spheres of life.

- ◆ **Article 14** states: "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India."

- ◆ **Article 15** states: "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, sex, place of birth, or any of them."
- ◆ **Article 15(3)** states: "Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children."
- ◆ **Article 16** states: "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State."

A number of administrative bodies were established to create opportunities for women, and many women were inducted into government positions.

By the 1950s, women began realizing that the constitutional promise of equality alone did not resolve the deeper issues of gender inequality. The challenge of addressing inequality among women continues to this day. One significant difficulty has been integrating the issues of Muslim women while safeguarding their religious and cultural identity. This has been most evident in the case of Muslim Personal Law.

1. Shahada Movement

Women became more active in the Shahada movement, which opposed the exploitation of tribal landless laborers by non-tribal landowners. Women demanded direct action on issues such as physical violence and abuse resulting from alcoholism. Groups of women traveled from village to village, entered liquor dens, and destroyed liquor pots and containers. If any woman reported physical abuse by her husband, others united against him.

2. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

This may be the first attempt to form an organization of women involved in different trades but sharing common features and work experiences, such as low earnings, extremely poor working conditions, harassment from authorities, and a lack of recognition for their socially useful work. SEWA aimed to improve the working conditions of women through training, technical aid, legal literacy, collective bargaining, and the promotion of values such as honesty, dignity, and simplicity.

3. United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front

During the 1970s, drought and famine affected rural Maharashtra, leading to a sharp rise in prices in urban Maharashtra. In 1973, the United Women's Anti-Price Rise Front was formed to combat inflation, demanding that the government fix minimum prices and distribute essential commodities. Women held demonstrations at government offices, and those who could not actively participate supported the movement by beating thalis with lathis or belans (rolling pins).

4. NavNirman Movement

The movement against price hikes in Maharashtra spread to Gujarat, where it was called the NavNirman movement. It began in Gujarat as a student-led movement against rising costs, corruption, and black marketing, with thousands of women joining. Methods included mock courts where judgments were passed on corrupt state officials and politicians, mock funeral processions, and protests aimed at ushering in a new era. Women also participated in the Naxalite movement in Andhra Pradesh, the NavNirman Youth Movement in Gujarat, and the Chipko movement. The Sramik Mahila

Sangathan, Progressive Organization of Women, and the Mahila Samadhi Sainik Dal merged during this period.

6.2.5.4 Contemporary Women's Movements in India (Third Wave)

Different thoughts and activism were sparked by the declaration of the UN Year of Women in 1975. The release of the Status of Women Committee Report revealed that the majority of Indian women suffered from poverty, illiteracy, and ill-health, as well as discrimination in both domestic and public spheres. This led to agitations and campaigns against sexism and patriarchy. The report provided several recommendations:

- ◆ Equality should be viewed not only as a matter of justice but also as essential for development.
- ◆ Achieving the economic empowerment of women is crucial for their full participation in society.
- ◆ Childbearing should be seen as a shared social responsibility rather than solely a woman's duty.
- ◆ Household work must be recognized as a form of national productivity, contributing to the economy.
- ◆ Marriage and motherhood should not be considered disabilities, and the emancipation of women should be closely linked to broader social emancipation.
- ◆ Special temporary measures are necessary to achieve de facto equality, ensuring women have equal opportunities.

6.2.5.5 Anti-Dowry Movement

If a woman died in a family, it was often considered accidental or a suicide, even when the death was due to dowry-related

violence. The women's movement brought attention to dowry deaths, demanding that they be treated as murders. Since 1975, the Progressive Organization of Women has organized formal protests against dowry in Hyderabad and Delhi, highlighting the violence inflicted upon women for dowry, including bride burning and abetment to suicide.

Mahila Dakshata Samiti was the first women's organization in Delhi to take up the issue of dowry harassment and dowry deaths. In June 1979, another women's organization, *Stri Sangharsh*, staged a demonstration against the death of Tarvinder Kaur, who had given a dying statement blaming her in-laws for killing her because her parents could not fulfill their dowry demands. This sparked public debates on dowry-related crimes. Until then, authorities considered dowry deaths to be private family matters. The movement raised public awareness about dowry harassment and deaths through debates, public demonstrations, and street plays. *Manushi*, a Delhi-based feminist magazine, organized public meetings and encouraged people to pledge that they would neither give nor accept dowry.

In 1980, the government passed a law against dowry-related crimes, treating abetment to suicide arising from dowry demands as a special crime and mandating a police investigation into the death of any woman within five years of marriage. In 1982, a Delhi Sessions Court magistrate found two individuals guilty of dowry murder and sentenced them to death. Due to protests, the Supreme Court upheld the verdict but commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment. In 1985, an amendment to the Criminal Law Act made cruelty to a wife a cognizable, non-bailable offense, punishable by up to three years of imprisonment and a fine. The Act also redefined cruelty to include mental as well as physical harassment. Under Section 174, a postmortem became

mandatory for any woman who died within seven years of marriage.

It remains difficult to gather evidence in dowry-related cases since many women hesitate to bring charges against their husbands and in-laws. Despite gaining public support, the women's movement has faced challenges in obtaining legal support for victims.

6.2.5.6 Movement Against rape

After the rape incident involving a woman named Rameeza Bee in Hyderabad, thousands of people protested against the culprits. The Bombay-based feminist group Forum Against Rape (now called the Forum Against Oppression of Women) decided to campaign for the case. There was also a demand for the implementation of relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and changes in the rape law. Joint action committees were formed, comprising members from socialist and communist parties, to coordinate the campaign. This was, in fact, the first time that feminist groups coordinated a nationwide campaign. Similar incidents led to many other issues being reported regarding atrocities against women. This sparked parliamentary debates, and the government introduced a bill defining the categories of custodial rape and a mandatory punishment of ten years' imprisonment.

6.2.6 Ethnic Movement

India is renowned for its unity in diversity, with different religions, castes, languages, customs, and values, which are collectively known as ethnicity. It has more than 2,000 ethnic groups. The term "ethnicity" was first used by French nationalist and scientist George Vacher de la Poughe in 1896 to describe the natural and cultural psychological and social characteristics of a population. The word "ethnic" originates from *ethnikus*

and *ethnikas* in Latin and Greek, meaning "nation." Different ethnic groups in India are advocating for their own ethnic rights and privileges. When foreigners invaded India, they attempted to share their customs and values, resulting in a blend of cultures. To protect the cultural identity of ethnic groups, ethnic movements inevitably arose. In India, various ethnic movements emerged as protests against changes imposed by the British, as these changes had political, economic, and social consequences. These ethnic movements, which are concentrated in particular regions of the country, obstruct social change. Some are democratic and peaceful, while others are violent. Thus, ethnic movements aim to preserve one's culture, religion, or region.

Characteristics of Ethnic Movement

In different regions, there are different ethnic groups, and the ethnic movements vary from other types of conflicts, revolutions, and social reforms. Below are some common characteristics of ethnic movements:

1. Culturally Oriented

Ethnic movements are culturally oriented and emphasize the traditional way of life, aiming to protect one's culture and ensure its continuation.

2. Ethnocentric

Ethnocentrism occurs when people judge other cultures from their own perspective. It perceives the strategies and decisions of other cultures and regions as well as their problems and situations based on preconceived notions of their own way of life.

3. Ethnic Groups as Pioneers

An ethnic group is a group of people who share common language, culture, geography, religion, and customs. They initiate the movement to ensure they can live according



to their cultural dictates. Ethnic movements are always founded by ethnic groups.

4. Rigidity and Resistance

Ethnic groups that start a movement are rigid in their beliefs and do not encourage social change. If policies and societal changes obstruct their way of life, they choose to raise their voices.

6.2.6.1 Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is determined at birth, inherent in human nature, and passed down from generation to generation. Ethnic identity was originally used to create boundaries that allowed a group to distance themselves from others. When the majority dominates the minority, ethnic identity gains momentum, as Rajni Kothari noted in 1988. The majority seeks to assimilate and integrate the minority into the mainstream. The Indian state has followed the Western model of a homogenous national culture, undermining tribal identities, which are deprived of land, livelihood, language, religion, and culture, as noted by Pathi. The interactions among racial groups do not result in the extinction of culture. The success of any ethnic identity group depends on the political support of the concerned government, as Oommen explained. Success can inspire other movements, such as the success of the Mizo or Naga revolts in Northeast India. Communal tensions, political rivalry, and economic support mobilize ethnic movements.

Forms of Ethnic Identity

There are six forms of ethnic identity and assertions in India. They are:

1. Linguistic Ethnicity

Every ethnic group has its own language as part of its ethnic identity. For example, the

Dravida Kazhagan movement in the 1940s and 1950s strongly opposed the imposition of the Hindu Dravidian language. Along with the national movement, linguistic ethnicity also gained momentum, according to Vanaik (1990). Language has more legitimacy than religion for administrative restructuring.

2. Ethno-Nationalism

Ethno-nationalism is more important in internal national studies than in international studies. According to Walker, the concept refers to "both the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own state and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state, particularly where the latter is conceived as a nation-state." In ethno-nationalism, a group develops loyalty to its nation, marked by the desire of an ethnic community to have absolute authority over its own political, economic, and social affairs. K.N. Panikkar (2011) writes that ethnic identities and loyalties periodically occur in Indian polity, using different strategies and methods. Ethnic conflict takes place when these groups struggle for autonomy and power.

3. Regionalism

Regionalism is blind loyalty to one's own region, which forms ethnic groups and ethnic consciousness, asserting their rights over a particular region. India is rich in ethnic diversity, leading to regional feelings that oppose national integration. This led to the formation of states in India like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Telangana, etc.

4. Casteism

Casteism is the blind loyalty to one's own caste for the social, economic, political, and other interests of its group. It reflects ethnic differentiation and plays an important role in Indian politics. For example, the Bahujan Samaj Party in UP, Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar, and Dravida Kazhagam in Tamil

Nadu share common interests and socio-cultural traits to strengthen solidarity. The non-uniform ideas between different castes pose a great danger to national integration. When caste is used to establish an identity through religion, it brings conflict and threatens community life.

5. Communalism

Communalism is a major source of communal conflict in India. It has its roots in British imperialism and emerged out of modern politics based on mass mobilization and imagined communal interests. Certain rulers, like the British, sowed the seeds of antagonism and distrust between different religions, creating a chasm among them in India. This continues even today.

6. Tribal Movements

Tribals are indigenous groups who have historically been neglected, exploited, and oppressed by landlords, moneylenders, and government officials. Tribals have adopted movements to assert their ethnic identity. Leaders from tribes such as the Oraon, Mundas, Maikda in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, and Northeast India fought against their imperial rulers to protect their lives and livelihoods. They have been directed toward maintaining their cultural identity and demanding a separate state to establish their status as Hindus through the Sanskritization process.

6.2.6.2 Ethnic Movements in India

Due to the economic, political need of ethnic groups, ethnic differences arise and thereby giving rise to ethnic conflict which result in ethnic violence. Ethnic movements in Assam, Punjab, North East states, West Bengal and Kashmir have created separate consciousness for the minorities to establish their identity in these states. Some of the ethnic movements are

1. Ethnic Movements in Punjab

a. Punjabi Suba Movement

It was started in Punjab soon after independence. Shiromani Akali Dal was leading the movement for Punjabi speaking state. Those who supported it raise the slogan Punjab Suba Amar Rahe and those who oppose it raised the slogan in favour of Maha Punjab. In 1955 April, government banned the slogans and ordered it under section 144 of Criminal Procedure. By this movement, Haryana was separated from Punjab in 1966. Chandigarh became a union territory to serve as a provisional capital of Punjab and Haryana.

b. The Khalistan Movement

It was carried out by Sikhs in 1970s and continued till 1990s to establish a sovereign Sikh country, Khalistan, in Punjab region to get more autonomy. It was founded by Jagjit Singh Chohan. The violent campaign includes bombings, assassinations, kidnapping and selective killing and massacres of civilians. The movement was supported by All India Sikh Student Federation and was led effectively by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Numerous military operations such as Operation Blue star led by General Arun Shridhar Vaidya were ordered by Central government in order to clear armed terrorists from Gurudwaras in June 1984. Nation was disturbed by the assassination of Indian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi by two Sikh bodyguards and it paved the way for anti Sikh riots and results in thousands of death. This was banned in India in 2019 as an unlawful association since it campaigns for a Punjab Independence referendum. Subsequently Punjab insurgency saw several secessionist militant groups becoming active in Punjab, supported by a section of the Sikh movement. Indian state controlled the revolution in the early 1990s.



2. Ethnic Movements in North East

a. Naga Movement

Large number of tribal people is not assimilated with mainstream culture due to physical inaccessibility, socio linguistic and religious distinctiveness. So they convert to Christianity. The first Tribal group the Nagas began a movement for an independent state and the movement succeeded in creating a separate state as Nagaland in 1963. Also Mizo continued struggle to get a status of state to Mizoram from union territory.

3. Ethnic Movements in South India

a. Dravidian Movement

Erode Venkatappa Ramaswami revered as Periyar or Thanthai Periyar started Dravidian movement or self respect movement in 1925 and he is regarded as the father of the Dravidian movement. Its aim is to achieve a society where backward sections of the community have equal human rights and encouraged backward sections to have self respect. His ideas were propagated to Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu. The movement was based on ideals of self respect and social empowerment such as Deep faith in nationalism and a critical attitude. Trenchant criticism of all religions and a deep faith in atheism. Dismantling the Brahmin hegemony which he considered the worst enemy of individual self respect.

b. Justice Party

Justice party was taken over by EV Ramaswami and he renamed it as Dravida Kazhagam in 1916. Initially it started as a protest against the domination of the Brahmins in Tamilnadu but after India's independence its attack was against North India domination of introducing Hindi as the official language. An anti Hindi movement gained momentum in Madras State with increased support from college students. The

main aim of the DMU was the establishment of a separate Dravida Nadu consisting of four southern states. The passing of the 16th constitutional amendment in 1962 made the advocacy of secessionism a crime made DMK change its constitution and drop the demand for secession. Now it demanded to greater state autonomy while limiting the powers of centres making Indian Federalism into a bargaining federalism.

4. Ethnic Movements in Assam

So many ethnic movements were there in Assam such as Bodo movement for autonomy, Tiwa movement, The Mishing, The Deoris, the Morons, the Sonowal Kacharis and intensive ethnic conflict was surfaced in the hill areas of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao movements

a. Tiwa Movement

Tiwa is an ethnic group in Assam and Meghalaya and also found in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. They belong to scheduled caste and tried Brahmanism. The movement has an objective of preserving their identity against the dominant non tribal communities in Assam. The tribal belt cannot protect land of the tribal people. The non tribal people decline the economy of the tribal people in various ways. In 1967, Tiwa people became politically organised in their effort to protect their socio cultural and land rights.

b. Bodo Movement

In 1952, the conflict between the native Bodo tribals and ethnic Bengali Muslim settlers began with clashes in different period. In 2012, the riots and violence between Bodos and Bangladeshi Muslims exploded in districts like Chirang, Dhubri etc. So many people were killed out of violence between them. The Bodos dislike the immigration of Bangladesh people as there was consequent loss of land and cultural identity. There

have widespread protest across north east demanding "early detection and deportation" of illegal Bangladesh immigrants. The Bodos have established relationships with other native tribal communities to address the issue. Like this all Bodo Land Muslim Student's Union has threatened to declare jihad and take up arms against the state.

5. Ethnic Movement in West Bengal

a. Gorkhaland Movement

It is the first movement intended to achieve statehood in India which is based on language. The conflict is between Nepali speakers and Bengali speakers. Gorkhaland has Nepali speakers of Darjeeling, Kalimpong etc. The culture is entirely different from that of the Bengalis in West Bengal. The identity crisis of these Nepali speaking people and the issues of under development and poverty are also the reasons behind this movement. In

2017, Government of West Bengal decided to impose Bengali as a language in all schools in West Bengal. This hurt the sentiments of Gorkhas who considered that an alien culture was imposing on people. After numerous protests, people began demand is for separate state and their agitation led to the shutdown of schools, colleges, offices and tea gardens and even the internet for a month. Gorkhaland inmates considered themselves as different from Bengali speakers and were dissatisfied by the movement from the government. Ethnic movements in India have been due to the conflicts raised out of diversity which was ignited by the Divide and Rule Policy of British people. Some movements were democratic but some of the movements were violent. These ethnic movements are enacted with the purpose of promoting or resisting social change.

Recap

- ◆ Dalits were heterogeneous groups who differed in terms of traditions, occupations, patterns of landholding, caste interaction, etc., and shared the stigma of untouchability.
- ◆ The Bahiskrit Hitkarini Sabha emerged during the Ambedkar period.
- ◆ The Dravida Kazhagam Movement arose as a protest against the Brahmanic Aryan culture and extolled the virtues of Dravidian culture.
- ◆ Peasants are people who engage in agriculture or related production using primitive means and who surrender part of their produce to landlords or agents of the state.
- ◆ The Jagirdars and Deshmukhs exploited the peasants and landless laborers and were called "Dora."
- ◆ The exploitation was legitimized and became known as the Vetti system.
- ◆ In the Tebhaga Movement, the sharecroppers demanded two-thirds of the produce for themselves and one-third for the landlord, instead of the previous fifty-fifty share.

- ◆ The first wave involved the mass mobilization of women for participation in the nationalist movement.
- ◆ The All India Women's Conference sought to improve working conditions for women, agitated against the immoral trafficking of women and children, and the inhuman custom of Devadasi.
- ◆ The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), founded in 1972 by Ela Bhatt, may be the first attempt to form an organization for women involved in different trades.
- ◆ The Mahila Dakshata Samiti was the first women's organization in Delhi to address issues of dowry harassment and dowry deaths.
- ◆ The Akshara Deepam program, aimed at the eradication of illiteracy, inspired women to fight for their rights.
- ◆ French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "Ecofeminism" in 1974.
- ◆ Ethnic groups, according to the primordial approach, are those who are bonded primarily by blood, descent, ancestors, family, belongings, roots, and solidarity.

Objective Questions

1. Who founded Satnami Movement?
2. Who founded Satya Shodak Samaj Movement?
3. When did Caste Disabilities Removal Act come into existence?
4. Who was the first to fight for the rights of the Mahars in Maharashtra?
5. Who started Marathi Newspaper *Somawanshi Mitra*?
6. Who established The *Safimarg Bodhak Nirashrit Samaj*?
7. Who founded Bahujan Samaj Party?
8. When was Champaran Agrarian Act consented by the Governor-General of India?

Answers

1. Guru Ghasindas
2. Jyotiba Bhol
3. 1850
4. G.B. Walangkar
5. Shivaram Kamble
6. Kisan Bansode
7. Kanshi Ram
8. 1st May 1918

Assignments

1. Explain the Role of Ambedkar in the upliftment of Dalits in India
2. Briefly explain Dalit movements
3. Explain peasant movements
4. Discuss the different aspects of Telangana movement
5. Analyse the women movement in India
6. Explain the ethnic movements in different parts of India

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FOURTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **SET-01**

B21SO04DC- SOCIETY IN INDIA(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence.

(10×1= 10)

1. Who outlawed the Sati system in 1829?
2. When inter-communal marriages were legalized?
3. Who authored the book '*Indian Unrest*'?
4. What are the two categories of family system?
5. What is the second name of joint family?
6. In which year the Civil Marriages Act was enacted?
7. In which Veda, Varna is mentioned for first time?
8. Who called for "*Educate, Organize and Agitate*"?
9. Who led the movement of "*Villuvandi Samaram*"?
10. Who is known as father of the Dravidian movement?
11. What are the six systems of Indian philosophy?
12. How many chapters are there in the Quran?
13. What is *Ijma* in Islam?
14. Who introduced the concept of Sanskritization?
15. What is de-globalization?

SECTION B

Answer any ten of the following questions in one or two sentences.

(10×2=20)

16. Status transmission
17. Joint family
18. Forms of marriage
19. Inter-Caste marriages
20. Special Marriage Act



21. Sanskritization
22. Dominant Caste
23. The Smṛti Literature
24. Darsanas
25. Retaliatory Communalism
26. Regionalism
27. Self-Respect Movement
28. Westernization
29. Modernization
30. Shahada Movement

SECTION C

Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5×4=20)

31. Explain the process and method of colonization.
32. Define family and discuss various typologies.
33. What is kinship? Examine its various regional differences in Indian society
34. Do you believe that caste contributes to the functioning of the society? Discuss major dysfunctions of caste system.
35. Define class and examine major factors that led to the changes in the social class system.
36. Distinguish between gender and sex and identify major differences.
37. Discuss the features of Christianity as a religion and examine its advent to Kerala.
38. Define tribal religion and examine their rituals and practices.
39. Examine the factors responsible for regionalism in India.
40. Define modernization. Write the dimensions of modernization.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2×10 = 20)

41. Discuss the main differences between the colonialist and nationalist views on Indian nationalism and national movement.
42. Explain the tribal political organization and examine the law and control system in the tribal society.
43. Do you think that anti-caste movements were successful in altering the social wellbeing of the lower castes? Locate the major anti-caste movements and its prominent leaders.
44. Do you favour Religious Syncretism? What are its advantages and disadvantages?





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :

Name :

FOURTH SEMESTER BA SOCIOLOGY EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE CORE - **SET-02**

B21SO04DC- SOCIETY IN INDIA(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or sentence.

(10×1= 10)

1. *The Fundamental Unity of India* was authored by whom?
2. Who introduced the concept of '*Daya*' (Compassion)?
3. Who described Ambedkar as a symbol of revolt?
4. In which year the Constituent Assembly was formed?
5. In which amendment, the words 'socialist and secular' were added to the Preamble of the Indian Constitution?
6. From which constitution, the directive principles of state policy were adopted?
7. Who authored *Annihilation of Caste*?
8. In which year Hindu Succession Act was passed?
9. Which act prohibited polygamous marriages in India?
10. Which section of IPC criminalises consensual sexual relations between individuals of the same sex?
11. What is the meaning of the word 'polis'?
12. In which village, Andre Beteille did study about caste, class and power?
13. Which country is ranked as fourth most dangerous country for women?
14. Which is the largest religion of the world?
15. Who authored *Arthashastra*?

SECTION B

Answer any TEN of the following questions in one or two sentences.

(10×2=20)

16. Animism
17. Magic
18. Separatist Communalism
19. Manaism
20. Endogamy



21. Gender Identity
22. The Śruti Literature
23. The Shahada
24. Separatist Communalism
25. Sanskritization
26. De-globalization
27. Gender Equity
28. The Charvaka
29. Liberal Communalism
30. Citizenship

SECTION C

Answer any five of the following questions in one paragraph. (5×4=20)

31. Examine the salient features of Indian Constitution
32. Explain major functions of family as a social institution
33. Discuss the joint family system and its functions and decline in the contemporary society
34. What is the anthropological approach used to study kinship systems and discuss its perspectives
35. Define magic, religion and science and examine their major differences
36. Define caste and examine its major characteristics
37. Examine intersectionality of caste and gender in Indian context
38. What are the four noble truths? Discuss the philosophy and social structure of Buddhism
39. Examine the atheist traditions in India and discuss the Charvaka philosophy.
40. Discuss Social Change. Write the factors for social change.

SECTION D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. (2×10 = 20)

41. Compare the approach of Gandhi and Ambedkar on nationalism and colonialism.
42. Prepare a note on the importance of the Constitution, explaining the meaning and relevance of secularism in Indian context, philosophy of the Indian Constitution with reference to the Preamble of the Constitution.
43. Discuss the evolution of religion as a system of beliefs and explain the major concepts related such as animism, animatism, totemism, mana etc.
44. Analyse the social transformation in the tribal people. List out the impact of globalization on the tribal area.



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