Sociology in India

COURSE CODE: B21SO02AN

Ancillary Course
Undergraduate Programmes

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Sociology in India
Course Code: B21SO02AN

**Ancillary Course
Undergraduate Programmes
Self Learning Material**

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SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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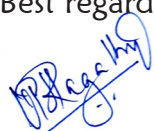Visit and Subscribe our Social Media Platforms

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. This Ancillary course, Sociology in India, explores the emergence, growth, and unique trajectory of sociological thought and practice within the Indian context. It offers learners a comprehensive understanding of how sociology as a discipline developed in India, shaped by indigenous traditions, colonial influences, and post-independence transformations. The course highlights major sociological perspectives, key thinkers, and significant research contributions that have defined Indian society's structural and cultural dynamics. Designed to foster critical insight, this course encourages learners to connect theoretical ideas with the lived realities of Indian social life. The Self-Learning Material has been thoughtfully prepared, integrating relevant examples and case illustrations to ensure conceptual clarity and contextual understanding.

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.

Best regards,

Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.
Vice Chancellor   01-01-2025

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Emergence of Sociology in India

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ outline the historical development of the discipline of Sociology and Social Anthropology

♦ familiarise the colonial and social conditions that led to the emergence of Sociology in India

♦ introduce the different approaches of studying Indian society and culture

Prerequisites

How do you greet someone who comes to your home? Definitely it will be in a modest and simple way. Mostly your behaviour would be just the reflection of what you receive from the guests. Their presence would be peaceful only to the point where they intrude into the privacy and discrupt your familial equilibrium. Once the guests try to control or rule the existing family functions and deeds, it transforms into an invasion. All the family functions, for instance, from daily chores to economic interactions, will be adversely affected.

Now place the same situation into a wider context. When a country approaches another one in a tactful way for trade interactions it is calm and diplomatic. But when one country interferes in the regulations and law of the other one, it changes as an invasion. The exertion of political and military power over a country to get domination is called colonisation. When the British came to India it appeared as a mere adventuresome approach, but gradually it changed to severe political and social dominations. British colonisation has affected Indian education and academic fields in immensly. It has led to the beginning of different approaches to study Indian culture and social system, which later resulted in the development of the disciplines- Sociology and Anthropology.

Keywords

Discussion

The social and political background of India during the 18th and 19th century was very interesting. During this period the nation witnessed a huge change in the socio-political cultural fabric due to British colonialism. Colonialism and the development of modern English education in India changed the intellectual foundation of Indian society. Colonial rule and English education helped us to understand current trends in Europe and other parts of the world. The emergence of Nationalism and its intellectual outcome contributed to the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Diverse approaches of studying Indian society and culture came up. It covers different research carried out by scholars on aspects of Indian society, such as caste, kinship, village, state, movements etc.

This unit contains reflexive understanding of the historical and current status of the discipline of Sociology and Social Anthropology. This is a kind of introspection on the nature of the discipline which helps us to understand its origin and evolution. In another way, it is an understanding on whether Sociology as a modern scientific discipline grasped the complexities involved in the structuring of contemporary Indian society and its cultural dynamics. Indian sociologists comprehend the fast-changing social realities of the country through their works and they have developed appropriate tools to understand these realities.

1.1.1 Colonial Background and Factors Responsible for the Development of Sociology

The intellectual history of the Sociology discipline is analysed in the historical and cultural backdrop of colonialism and independence movements. Sociologists and social anthropologists of the country are products of their own social and cultural background in which they lived and worked. Broadly, the emergence and development of the discipline depended on geopolitical interest, national aspirations and intellectual traditions in the colonial and post-colonial period. Let us elaborate a few factors:

a. Colonialism

Colonial administrators used the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology as a tool for the betterment of their administration and control of their subjects. In the late 18th and 19th century the establishment of universities, research institutions, government institutions for data collection, translation and productions of texts constituted the emergence of Sociology in India. In the socio-political sphere, colonialism put an end to the age-old feudal system and it also changed the structure of the political system.

The introduction of new technological developments, such as railways, telegraphs and printing press facilitated communication between people in different parts of the country. It helped the movement of the people and ideas across the borders. The establishment of schools, colleges and universities helped the spread of modern English education in the subcontinent. Along with this, the expansion of administrative services and judicial institutions into the remote areas of the country helped in the modernisation of Indian society. British colonialism and subsequent developments led to the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India.

b. Reformist and Revivalist Movements

As a result of colonial encounters in the early 19th century we witnessed the emergence of two kinds of movement in Indian society. The Reformist movements such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and Mahadev Govind Ranade's Prarthana Samaj in Bombay advocated modernisation of Indian tradition. The Revivalist movements such as Arya Samaj launched by Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) and Ramakrishna Mission founded by Vivekananda emphasised going back to the purity of the Vedas and thereby bringing back spiritual awakening of classical traditions. Leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar had collected empirical data about sati and child widows. Along with the reinterpretation of Hindu scriptures, they used these data for the reformation of Hindu tradition and practices.

Both Reformist and Revivalist movements were caught up in the difficulty of tradition and modernity debate. On the one hand, revivalists stood for the old customs, values, ideals etc. on the other hand, the reformists adored modern ideas of rationality, freedom and equality. Both these streams of movements led to the deep understanding of Indian social realities and created self-confidence among the people.

c. British Education

To assist colonial expansion British administrators advocated English education in colonial India. They wanted to create an upper and middle class who were Indians in blood but British in taste. This group of people would assist the British government to translate policies and programs in the lower strata of the population. In 1835, Lord Macaulay introduced a new education policy for India. Macaulay's Minute first, replaced Persian language and made English an official language for instruction. Second, it was instructed to translate western knowledge to the vernacular languages.

In the latter half of the 19th century, they established universities in three British Presidencies, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. In the initial years they taught English, History, Philosophy, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology. In the later phase they realised the need of understanding the social institutions, customary practices and cultural specificities of Indian society. Therefore, they introduced Sociology and Social Anthropology at the university level. This helped the elite section of the society to connect with the western intellectual traditions and they produced sociological literature on the Indian Society.

d. Emergence of Nationalism

The developments of Sociology and Social Anthropology has had a greater influence on the development of nationalism. The British education and anti-colonial movement developed self-confidence among the Indian's. Indian scholars and intellectuals produced counter narratives about Indian society and culture. During this time leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji (1825 – 1917), Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928), and M. G. Ranade (1824-1901) and others worked hard to create social and intellectual self-awareness and self-esteem. On the one hand, they emphasised on the strength of Indian society and civilisation. On the other hand, they advocated radical social and cultural reform in the society to address the issues faced by the country.

The new education forced native elite to concentrate on India's social institutions and political systems. Their interaction with western culture and literary traditions motivated them to look back on Indian culture and literature. Along with the critical interpretation and reinterpretation of ancient texts, scholars like R. C. Dutt started critically

looking at the economic policy of the British administration. His book *Economic History of India* explained the dire consequences of British rule over Indian rural communities and agriculture. He mapped the transition of Indian villages from self-sufficient village republics to a declining rural economy controlled by moneylenders and landlords.

e. Independence Movements

The colonial rule and the emergence of nationalism led to a mass movement in the Indian subcontinent. The national political consciousness led to the development of organised movement in the latter half of the 19th century.

In the initial stages, the Indian independence movement was dominated by the urban elite and educated groups. M. K. Gandhi's entry into politics made the independence movement a mass-based movement. During this time people from all walks of life started participating in the freedom struggle. Intellectuals and educated people responded to this call differently.

f. Planning and Developments in Post Independent India

After a long and turbulant struggle India got independence on 15th August 1947. During the post-independence period India witnessed a huge structural change. As a developing country, India followed the path of planned development and parliamentary democracy. To initiate planned development, the state needed to collect data and analyse it in a scientific manner. The establishment of the National Planning Commission and Five-year plan demanded more data about the social and economic status of the people.

During this time a number of research and training institutes were established and they needed trained sociologists and social scientists to analyse and evaluate the functioning of state policies and other state machinery. The Planning Commission of India started a Research Programme Committee to fund the social science research related to planning and development. Programme Evaluation Board under the Planning Commission was established to evaluate the outcomes of the planned development. In 1969, with the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the Indian Government found Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) under the chairmanship of D.R. Gadgil.

g. American and British Influence

In the colonial and post-colonial period, British anthropological theories and methods influenced the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Most of the first-generation scholars were trained in British Universities or under foreign scholars. After the end of the Second World War the theatre of sociological theories and research shifted to America. During this period the independent movement and subsequent formation of new nation states in Asian countries led to the development of a strategic interest by America in the south of the region. As a part of the cold war regime, the establishment of Area Studies Programs in American universities remained a prime source of funds for the research on Indian society.

These international, national and regional developments helped the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. Community Development Programs initiated by philanthropic organisations such as Ford Foundation led to the flourishing of the disciplines across India during the 1960s and 1970s. To examine the impact of Community Development Programs, Universities and teaching departments started

research methodology courses with emphasis on quantitative techniques. All these social, political, economic and intellectual factors influenced the development of sociology and social anthropology in India

1.1.2 Social Background and Factors Responsible for the Development of Sociology

India has rich traditions of critical thinking and reflecting on the social realities from the 3rd century B.C. onwards. Though sociology is a modern academic discipline, we can trace its roots in the classical and medieval texts and works. Different philosophical and religious texts from the classical traditions speak about the society and culture in India. These texts were sacred in its content and focused on metaphysical and abstract social entities. Here we will discuss the history of Indian social thought from the classical period to the British period. As we know, Sociology and Social Anthropology is a relatively new discipline but the root of the study of society and social systems started from the classical period onwards.

a. Classical Traditions

India had rich intellectual traditions from the classical period onwards. Its intellectual heritage is spread in the religious and philosophical texts written in classical languages such as Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali. In classical thought we can see six schools of thought namely Yoga, Sankhya, Nyaya, Vaishesika, Vedanta and Mimamsa. These six schools of thought gave a strong foundation for classical thought in India. Along with these, thirteen principal Upanishads contributed for deep philosophical enquiries into inner life and ultimate destiny of human beings.

Along with these Upanishads, the classical Indian mythological, religious and spiritual texts such as the Veda, Puranas, Smritis provide details about the social conditions and social order that prevailed in ancient India. Other than these Sanskrit texts, we have a rich Buddhist and Jain religious script which contributed to the development of Indian social thought. All these scripts helped the people form their spiritual and socio-cultural lives in a concrete manner.

Intellectuals from the classical time also contributed to the understanding of society and polity. The writings of Kautilya and Sukracharya helped us to understand the laws, customs, economy, polity, culture, morality, aesthetics and science in the ancient period. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a monumental text on political economy and political institutions of that time. And Shukracharya's *Niti Shastra* offers vast wisdom on different dimensions of moral life, social and cultural life, statecraft and ethical duties of a man. Manu's *Dharmashastra* explains different aspects of social life, rituals, code of conduct prevailed at the time. This text was prescriptive in nature and proposed ideal moral duties to the people.

Along with these, traveller's accounts, such as those of the Greeks, Romans, Jews and Chinese, also contributed to the understanding of social and cultural life of the people in India. A Greek ambassador named Megasthenes gave detailed descriptions about the social hierarchy of the classical time. He was at the court of Chandragupta Maurya. Chinese travellers, such as Fa-Hien (AD 400-411), Yuan Chwang (AD 629-644), and I-Tsing (AD 671-695) illustrated the socio-cultural setting of Indian society during the 5th and 6th century. Arab travellers, such as Al-Biruni (973-AD 1030) Ibn Batutta also provided a detailed account of the Indian caste system and related practices. All these accounts help us to understand the social and political conditions of the respective period. They directly observed the day-to-day life of

the people and chronological understanding of these will give direction to the changing nature of Indian society and culture.

b. Medieval Legacies

When we move to the medieval period, we can see a large amount of Bhakti literature written in regional languages, such as Awadhi, Braj, Maithali, Bengali, Assamese, Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. This Bhakti tradition questioned the dominant nature of Sanskrit and communicated with people in regional language.

In this period Indian society had direct interaction with Muslim communities. This encounter with Islamic tradition led to the rise of the Sufi traditions and it had a wide range of influence on the religious values and practices in Northern India. The emergence and expansion of bhakti tradition and the development of Sikh religion are good examples of the syncretic traditions due to the influence of Islamic and Sufi thoughts.

Abul Fazal's well-known work "*Ain-i-Akbari*" gives a wonderful description of society in all its aspects in Akbar's time. Abul Fazal was a famous Muslim scholar in the court of Mughal Emperor Akbar (1556-1605). He gave detailed descriptions of the revenue system and administrative practices in the late 16th century Mughal India.

c. Modern Development

In the mid-18th century, British penetration into India had in-depth consequences for Indian society. Due to colonial interventions in different fields the age-old tradition of India began to decline. Especially, due to the expansion of the English language for official purposes led to the marginalisation of classical languages such as Sanskrit and Persian got marginalised and lost their glorious positions. In India, Sociology and Social Anthropology as a scientific study of society emerged as a result of the contributions of different Indologists, and colonial administrators. Their efforts to understand Indian social institutions, social systems, and cultural practices led to the development of the discipline in a systematic manner.

In the initial stage of colonial administration, different Indologists such as William Jones, Max Muller, Henry Maine, Alfred Lyelt etc. tried to study different social institutions, such as family, law, kinship, caste, religion etc. They stressed on the importance of preserving these social institutions and cultural practices. As a part of governance British administrators took initiatives to study Indian people, their races and cultures. Henry Verelst, the Governor of Bengal and Bihar, took initiatives to collect information about the important families and their customs. As a part of these works British administrators prepared Census Reports, Imperial Gazetteers, District Gazetteers, and Monographs. Along with these, there were different ethnographic works by scholars like J.H. Hutton, Edward Theurston, H. Risley, Sir Henry Maine and W.H. Baden Powell on the village community, caste, religion, rituals, and customs in India.

Along with these Christian missionaries took interests in understanding local language, culture and religious practices to help their civilisation mission. In 1816 Abbe Dubois, a French missionary in Mysore, published a book titled *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies.* In this book Dubois explained Indian culture, tradition, customs and rituals.

1.1.3 Development Stages of Indian Sociology and Social Anthropology

In the first semester, Introduction to Sociology we have discussed the socio-political background of the emergence of Sociology in the context of Europe. As

we know, in 18th and 19th century Western Europe witnessed a rapid economic and industrial development. The techno-scientific, intellectual and commercial revolution in 18th century Europe led to a massive socio-political change in the society. Sociology as a discipline developed to grasp these paradigm shifts in the social, cultural and political life of the people.

Development of natural science and scientific thinking accelerated the development of sociology as a scientific discipline. Classical sociologists, like Comte and Durkheim, tried to apply similar scientific methods to understand the social and political world of human beings. Intellectual and Scientific revolutions immensely contributed to the development of this science of society in Europe. This intellectual response to the problems or disorders caused by industrialisation and political revolutions led to the development of scientific study of society and different social institutions.

In India and other Asian countries Sociology and Social Anthropology emerged as a result of colonial expansions. In the pre-colonial period different indigenous writings reflected on the social, political and cultural terrain of Indian society. Most of these abstract writings were spiritual in nature and sacred in character. Along with this philosophical text, different social reformers wrote on social issues prevailing in that society. Another source of information on Indian society and culture is the writings of travellers and visitors from the neighbouring countries. These travel accounts provide reliable information about the social, economic and political situation of Indian society.

In the 19th and 20th century studies on Indian society and culture were influenced by three dominant narratives.

a) Orientalists

b) Indologists

c) Colonial ethnographers

In the colonial background these three perspectives tried to understand Indian society from a different methodological framework. The first group of scholars, the Orientalists, was fascinated with the philosophical richness of the Indian classical texts and they produced a romanticised account about the social and cultural life of the people. This historical account about Indian society and culture did not focus on the variations in different caste groups and communities.

On the other hand, Indologists focused on the Sanskrit texts and other classical documents to understand Indian society and social order. This textual perspective on Indian society and culture looked at the normative principles and ignored the actual practices. This 'book-view' provides an upper caste view on Indian society which is prescriptive and ideal in nature. They were not cognizant about the social changes due to different internal and external factors.

Finally, the colonial ethnographers produced a number of monographs about Indian castes, tribes, villages, and religious communities. As a part of colonial projects these writings produced a Eurocentric and racial account on Indian people and culture. The methodological and theoretical frameworks of these ethnographic accounts are ahistorical and inert in nature. During this time, administrator cum anthropologists, like Edgar Thurston, William Crooke, Herbert Risley and J.H. Hutton conducted ethnographic research in different parts of the country. Colonial rulers used this data for the formulation of policies and governance. According to them, Indian society is a hierarchically stratified society with superstition and barbarism. Thus, they are not capable of governing themselves

and they cannot modernise with the help of western institutions.

In the later period, the social reform movement and nationalist awakenings led to the questioning of these colonial accounts. Indian scholars and philosophers criticised foreign interpretation of Indian philosophy and religious practices. Indian historians and economists developed alternative accounts on Indian history, economy and society. On the other hand, sociologists and social anthropologists imbibed energy from the current of anti-colonial and nationalist sentiments.

It is reflected in the writings of pioneers of Indian sociology and social anthropologists, such as L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, Sarat Chandra Roy, G.S. Ghurye, B.N Seal, B.K. Sarkar, Radhakamal Mukherjee, D. P. Mukherji, B.N Dutt, K.P Chattopadhayay, A.R. Desai, M.N. Srinivas etc. They were critical of the Eurocentric and racist nature of colonial ethnography and rejected western theories and assumptions on Indian society. They realised that the western categories and concepts are not enough to understand Indian society.

In the history of Indian sociology three institutional developments made a remarkable change. Firstly, in 1914 the University of Bombay started a postgraduate course in Economics and Sociology. Secondly, from 1917 onwards the University of Calcutta began to offer Sociology to the post-graduate students. Thirdly, in the same year Mysore University introduced an undergraduate course in Sociology. These developments in teaching Sociology as a discipline helped the process of institutionalisation and professionalisation in India. Students graduated from Bombay, Calcutta, Lucknow joined or started new departments and led to the spread of sociology and social anthropology in India.

According to Srinivas and Panini (1986) the development and growth of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India fall in to three phases: "first, covering the period between 1773-1900 A.D., when their foundations were laid; the second, 1901-1950 A.D., when they became professionalised; and finally, the post-Independence years, when a complex of forces including the undertaking of planned development by the government, the increased exposure of Indian scholars to the work of their foreign colleagues, and the availability of funds, resulted in considerable research activity". Here we will give an account of the history of the development of Sociology and Anthropology in India through mapping the three phases:

a) The foundations

b) Institutionalisation

c) Professionalisation

a. First Phase: The Foundations

In the pre-independent phase, Indologists and administrators rediscovered India's past and present through the interpretation of early scriptures, epics and law books, and they also relied on empirical explorations and census reports. Subsequently, professional sociologists and social anthropologists started taking interest in Indian culture and civilisation. India became a site for ethnographic investigations. During 1901-02 W.H.R. Rivers did intensive fieldwork among the Todas and he published his monumental work *The Todas* in 1906. After that he published several articles on the origin of hypergamy, kinship and marriage in India. G. S. Ghurye and K. P. Chattopadhyaya, students of Rivers enriched Indian Sociology and Social Anthropology till the 1940s. Radcliffe-Brown's ethnographic study on the Andaman Islanders was another significant

work published on the Indian tribes. During this period two Indian origin anthropologists took initiative to study the castes and tribes of India. L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer studied the castes and tribes of Cochin and Mysore and he produced an account of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. S. C. Roy founded the journal called *Man in India* which worked as a mouthpiece of anthropological studies in India. Roy wrote different monographs about the tribes of Bihar. In 1934 he wrote a book entitled, *Caste, Race and Religion in India*.

The establishment of the Ethnographic Survey of India in 1905 became a milestone in the history of the development of the discipline of Anthropology. They published 26 volumes of district gazetteers and Imperial Gazetteer of India in 1908-1909. These volumes provide detailed descriptions of different castes and tribes of each province in India.

b. Second Phase: Institutionalisation

In 1914 Bombay University got a grant from the Government of India to start teaching Sociology. A course of lectures in Sociology and Economics was offered to the postgraduate students in Bombay University in the same year. In 1919, the department of Sociology and Civics was founded under the leadership of Patrick Geddes who was a distinguished biologist and town-planner. Under Geddes and G.S Ghurye, Bombay became a centre of sociological studies and research.

In 1917, B.N Seal took the initiative to introduce Sociology in the Post-Graduate Councils of Arts and Sciences at Calcutta University. Two prominent sociologists, Radhakamal Mukherjee and Benoy Kumar Sarkar, were the teachers of this newly introduced subject. Along with Bombay

and Mysore, Lucknow became another centre of Sociology and Anthropology. In 1921, Radhakamal Mukherjee started a combined department of Economics and Sociology. D. P. Mukerji and D.N. Majumdar joined the department in 1922 and 1928 respectively and Lucknow became a prominent centre of teaching and research in Sociology and Anthropology. During 1921-1929 B.N Seal became Vice Chancellor of Mysore University. Along with A. R. Wadia; B.N Seal was instrumental in introducing Social Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Mysore in 1928. In the same year Osmania University started teaching Sociology at undergraduate level. In the 1930s Pune University started teaching Sociology under the leadership of Irawati Karve.

During this period Sociology was taught along with other subjects like Economics, Anthropology and Philosophy. In Bombay University and Lucknow University Sociology was taught along with Economics. In Calcutta University and Mysore University Sociology courses were taught along with Anthropology and Social Philosophy, respectively. In the initial stages sociologists and social anthropologists tried to integrate both disciplines in teaching and research. At another level, the integration of Indological perspective with sociology helped to synthesise text and context in the study of Indian society. Both these attempts gave valuable insights into the social and cultural life of Indian society. Another important trend of this phase was that it was very difficult to distinguish between Sociology, Social Anthropology, Social Psychology and Social Philosophy. The subject matter and theoretical perspectives were colliding with each other.

Thematically and methodologically, this phase represents the examination of colonial impact on Indian society in general and Sociology as a discipline in particular.

It also signifies the response of the Indian scholars against the colonial interpretation of Indian text and context. In another words, this nationalist response helped the institutionalisation of the discipline. They covered tribal, caste, rural and urban issues in teaching and research. As Nagla B.K pointed out, during this phase the theoretical focuses were on the evolutionary perspective and British anthropological traditions with emphasis on diffusionism and functionalism. In the teaching of Indian social institutions, the emphasis was on Indological perspective and focused on social pathological problems and ethnological descriptions.

c. Third Phase: Professionalisation

After the independence and emergence of India as a developing country, Social Science in general and Sociology in particular became an organ of the state. Different government agencies such as the Planning Commission used sociological resources for the development of the country. The colonial dominame of Social Anthropology slowly got lifted after independence. Sociologists and social anthropologists started muddling through the new developmental imaginaries of the state and they provided different kinds of assistance for the economic development promised by the state. For a planned development, the state needs reliable data on the life and activities of the people all over India.

The establishment of the Planning Commission of India and Programme Evaluation Board increased demand for professional sociologists and social anthropologists. For planned development state needs systematic collection and analysis of data. During this period, policy makers and government officials realised the importance of sociologists and anthropologists in the planning process and its evaluation. In 1969, as a response to the recommendation of the Planning Commission, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) was established. During this time, Five Year Plan development grants helped in the expansion of Sociology in different universities across the country. University Grants Commission (UGC) took special interest in the sanctioning of new posts in university teaching departments.

During this phase we witnessed the broadening of the discipline which expanded into new theoretical paradigms and new areas of investigations. The cold war politics and the expansion of American funding changed the orientation of sociological research. The development of Area Studies in the USA universities and funding from philanthropic organisations such as Ford Foundation electrified this development in the 1950s and 60s. According to Dhanagare, the Indian government incorporated Community Development programs for the social reconstruction of rural societies. These developments created job opportunities for sociologists and social anthropologists.

The academic and professional collaboration with American Universities and philanthropic organisations helped Indian Sociologists and social anthropologists to get funds for research projects on village communities. They studied the impact of the community development programmes on Indian villages. This situation demands up-to-date knowledge about qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis. As Beteille noted, it led to the introduction of research methodology courses in the teaching curriculum of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India.

As Srinivas noted about the tendency "which is as yet confined to a few sociologists but which it is likely to strengthen in the future is to borrow wholesale the methods, techniques, ideas and even the problems

of American Sociology and to study them in India". Sociologists of this persuasion use quantitative methods, questionnaires, schedules, scaling techniques, opinion polls and content analysis. Indian sociologists are carrying out research into cross cultural problems for which the inspiration as well as the funds came from the United States or the UNESCO. Thus, since independence a number of studies on different aspects of Indian villages have been carried out by Indian and foreign sociologists. They focused on changing the nature of social life, political activities, and religious networks in the Indian villages. These studies also looked at the process of urbanisation and the growing link between villages and cities.

One of the important trends of this phase was the prominence of quantitative methods of study. Sociologists and social anthropologists used modern survey research methods and techniques for their empirical research. Another trend of this time was the control of state and funding agencies in setting the agenda of research priorities. On one hand funding from philanthropic organisations helped the researches but at the same time it created unnecessary complications between them. Another important trend of this time was the separation of Sociology and Social Anthropology. During the foundation phase and institutionalisation both these disciplines worked together and shared an intellectual heritage.

1.1.4 Different Perspectives on Indian Society

Broadly speaking, as an intellectual endeavour, sociologists of India developed different perspectives to understand Indian society. These perspectives emerged out of the ideological and methodological lens through which different scholars view society. There are different perspectives or approaches to study Indian society, such as Indological perspective, Field view, Civilisational Perspective, Marxian perspective, Feminist Perspective, Subaltern Perspective, Environmental Perspective, and Dalit Perspective. Some of these perspectives and contributions of prominent thinkers for the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology will be discussed further.

a. Indological and Textual Perspectives

This approach was developed by G.S. Ghurye and Louis Dumont. Both scholars used an Indological approach to study Indian Society. According to this perspective the sacred scriptures and ancient Sanskrit texts offer accurate guidelines to study the history, culture and society of India. Indologists and orientalists used this approach to explore the sources of Indian tradition and culture.

b. Structural Functionalism

It focuses on the study of different social elements for the ordering and patterning of the social world. This perspective also focuses on the functional unity of the system, in which all parts of the system work together with harmony and internal consistency. Structural functionalist perspective relies on field work traditions to understand social realities. It emphasises contextual understanding of social institutions and social phenomena.

c. Marxism

Sociologists and social anthropologists of India reformulated different Marxist categories and paradigms to understand Indian realities. It focuses on the materialistic and economic interpretation of Indian social reality and argues that the property relations prevalent in Indian society will help to understand the nature of social change happening in the society. They used dialectical materialist interpretation

to understand the transformation of Indian society.

d. Synthesis of Textual and Field View

Some scholars integrated book view which looked at ancient Sanskrit texts with field view which focused on the life of the people and their experience. This synthesis of textual and field view produced very interesting studies on the Indian family system and kinship system. They mapped continuities and changes in these institutions and social systems.

e. Subaltern Perspective

This perspective emerged in historiographic writings in the 1960s. According to this perspective, history should be written from the mass perspective, not from the elite perspective. They wanted rid of Eurocentric and elitist bias of colonial and nationalist historiography. They argued that subalterns are not only the subject of history, they are makers of history.

1.1.5 Inter Relationship Between Sociology and Anthropology

In India, Sociology and Social Anthropology, regarded as twin disciplines, have a history of over a centuary. Though both disciplines have different identities, they are related to each other in different aspects. Most of the time they share the same subject matter and it is very difficult to differentiate each other. In the situation of India, both disciplines emerged and developed in the context of colonial expansion and part of the British administration. We can trace its origin back to three or four centuries, but in the early 19th century it emerged as a scientific and systematic discipline.

Different scholars highlighted the relationship between the origin of Social Anthropology and colonial expansions. According to Srinivas and Panini, "Anthropology, as is well-known, was the product of European expansion over the world during the last three or four centuries. The need to govern men of various races and vastly different cultures created in the European rulers a need to study the life and cultures of the ruled".

As an academic discipline Social Anthropology emerged prior to Sociology. As we understood, Sociology as a discipline emerged in the west. Now western scholars, including Indian scholars, translated western approaches to study their own societies and culture. However, in the later phase different scholars from India realised the uniqueness of Indian society and emphasised the importance of indigenisation of the discipline.

The most taken for granted distinction between Sociology and Social Anthropology is that, sociological studies focus on modern or urban societies while social anthropology focuses on traditional or primitive societies. Sociology is conventionally understood to focus on the study of modern industrial societies and Anthropology on the study of primitive, tribal or pre-modern societies, the 'other cultures' of the Western imagination. This traditional classification underwent serious transformation in the context of new convergence of disciplines and practices. Unlike Natural Science, Sociology and Social Anthropology are influenced by the imprint of specific historical contexts and cultural configurations.

In the initial years of colonial expansions, different scholars from foreign countries came to India and carried out ethnographic fieldwork among the tribal people and their cultures. They came up with rich ethnographic accounts about different tribal communities in various parts of the country. While colonial government focused on the tribal culture

and their social structure for administrative purposes, missionaries worked to convert them into Christianity. These ethnographic accounts on tribal societies helped in the emergence of social anthropology.

On the other hand, some scholars focused on the Hindu texts and scriptures to understand Hindu society and its culture. This Indological approach to study Indian society laid foundations for the development of Sociology in India. Both disciplines contributed to the understanding of Indian society through different research techniques. Whereas, Anthropology used participant observation techniques, Sociology used textual analysis and survey research. In the post independent scenario, the distinction between Sociology and Social Anthropology blurred.

Recap

- ♦ Colonial administration, English education, and the emergence of nationalism contributed to the development of Sociology and Social anthropology.

- ♦ Different Sanskrit texts contributed to the development of social thought in India.

- ♦ Indologists, administrators, and missionaries collected and studied information on the Indian caste system, tribal communities and other aspects of Indian society.

- ♦ Emergence and development of Sociology discipline depended on geopolitical interest, national aspirations, and intellectual traditions in the colonial and post-colonial period.

- ♦ Reformist and revivalist movements led to the deep understanding of Indian social realities and created self confidence among the people.

- ♦ Christian missionaries took interest in understanding local language, culture and religious practices of India to help their civilising mission.

- ♦ In the 19th and 20th centuries, studies on Indian society and culture were influenced by orientalism, indology, and colonial ethnography.

- ♦ The foundations, institutionalisation, and professionalisation are the three phases of history of the development of Sociology and anthropology in India .

- ♦ First phase laid the foundations by the British Indologists, administrators and missionaries.

- ♦ The second phase marked the Institutionalisation of the discipline, establishment of Bombay school, Lucknow School, Mysore School etc.

- ♦ The final phase saw the professionalisation of the discipline in the post-independent period.

- Development of Bombay and Lucknow School of Sociology marked a milestone in the history of Indian Sociology and Social Anthropology.

- The establishment of the Ethnographic Survey of India in 1905 became a milestone in the history of the development of the discipline of Anthropology.

Objective Questions

1. When did the first department of Sociology and Civics start at Bombay University?

2. Who did the intensive fieldwork among the Todas and published the book *The Todas*?

3. Who wrote the ethnographic work *Andaman Islanders*?

4. Who founded the journal called *Man in India*, which worked as a mouthpiece of anthropological studies in India?

5. When was the *Ethnographic Survey of India* established?

6. Which perspective claims that the sacred scriptures and ancient Sanskrit texts offer accurate guidelines for studying the history, culture and society of India?

7. Which methodological perspective did G.S Ghurye follow?

8. Which approach focuses on the materialistic and economic interpretation of Indian social reality?

9. Which methodological framework emphasises the study of Indian society through the interpretation of ancient texts with field view?

10. Which approach says that history should be written from the mass perspective, not from the elite perspective?

11. Which academic field of study focuses on primitive, tribal, or pre-modern societies?

12. Who is the author of the *Arthashastra*?

13. Which book of Sukracharya offers vast wisdom on different dimensions of moral life, social and cultural life, statecraft and ethical duties of a man?

14. Who is the author of the book, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies?*

15. Who wrote the ethnographic study of India on Tribes of Bihar?

16. Which social reform movement advocated modernisation of Indian tradition, led by the Mahadev Govind Ranade?

17. Who launched Arya Samaj?

18. Who was the founder of the Ramakrishna Mission?

19. When did Lord Macaulay introduce Macaulay's Minute to introduce new education policy for India?

20. Who is the author of the *Economic History of India*?

21. In which year was the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) established?

22. Who was the founding chairman of ICSSR?

Answers

1. 1919

2. W.H.R. Rivers

3. Radcliffe-Brown

4. S. C. Roy

5. 1905

6. Indological and textual perspectives

7. Indology

8. Marxian approach

9. Synthesis of textual and field views

10. Subaltern perspective

11. Anthropology

12. Kautilya

13. Niti Shastra

14. Abbe Dubois

15. S.C.Roy

16. Prarthana Samaj

17. Dayananda Saraswati

18. Vivekananda

19. 1835

20. R. C. Dutt

21. 1969

22. D.R. Gadgil

Assignments

1. Critically evaluate British colonisation and its effects on developing academic fields in India.

2. Brief the various stages in the formation of Indian Sociology and Anthropology.

3. Bring out the various approaches taken up by Sociologists to study Indian society.

4. Explain the socio-political background in the formation of Sociology.

5. Validate the role played by three main antecedents in the development of Sociology.

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UNIT

2 | Bombay and Lucknow Schools of Sociology

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ introduce the intellectual and academic background of Indian Sociology of the 19th and 20th centuries

♦ narrate the legacy of dominant schools of Indian sociology and their institutional background

♦ expose the importance of sociological foundations in understanding new contexts and new questions of contemporary social transformations

Prerequisites

How do you find companionship in a group? You may find similarities in interests, ways of thinking, attitudes etc. You are already familiar with the features of 'social groups' from Semester one. When people with common characteristics and approaches come together, it opens better chances of forming a group. Likewise, when intellectuals and academicians of 18th and 19th century India came together and shared their common interests and opinions about Indian society; it jointly formed Schools of thought. By definition, a school of thought is a set of ideas or opinions that a group of people share about a subject or topic. The social, cultural and political background of India accelerated different schools of thought in Sociology and Anthropology. Misinterpretations about Indian culture by Western researchers were literally bothering Indian intellectuals and social thinkers. A deep understanding of social structure and culture was inevitable for social development and planning. Alongside, there had been institutionalisation of sociology in the formal educational systems also.

Keywords

Discussion

The intellectual and institutional histories of Indian sociology and social anthropology are vital in understanding the development of the major schools of thought of Sociology. In post-independent India, the development of sociology was an intellectual response of different Indian scholars against the misrepresentation of Indian culture and civilisation by western scholars. They realised the importance of proper understanding of Indian society and its culture.

After independence, Sociology developed its own identity. As M N Srinivas noted, "It is only with India's independence, and with the launching of a programme of planned development that a widespread need was felt for sociological research. Independence also marked the increasing exposure of Indian universities to intellectual traditions other than the British, and in particular, the American".

During the 19th and early 20th century Bombay and Lucknow were important centres of cultural and political renaissance in India. It offers intellectual and academic background for the establishment of universities and centres of learning in these two places. Simultaneously, they also became main centres of social science teaching and research in the formal academic environment. As we discussed, the administrative need of British rulers forced them to collect information about the society and culture of India. In the next level, with the help of census and other official mechanisms they collected data about Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The contributions of ideologists, administrators, and missionaries helped the development of sociology as a discipline. In the early 20th century we witnessed the development of teaching of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India Universities.

1.2.1 Intellectual Traditions and Institutional Developments

In India, there are different intellectual traditions in the discipline of Sociology, such as Bombay School, Lucknow School, Mysore School, etc. There are different factors that contribute to these differences in the sociological traditions of the Indian subcontinent. The ideological orientation of the scholar, socio-cultural background of the development of the institution, political and economic context of research, national and international collaborations, etc. are some of the important factors that contributed to the development of such traditions in Indian sociology. They also contributed to the development of the discipline with a plurality of perspectives, theories and methodologies. The so-called legacy of the Bombay and Lucknow Schools of Sociology started from the teaching and research in these departments of Sociology. They became a pioneering centre for sociological studies in India. Let us consolidate the steps involved in their academic process:

a. These departments hosted pioneering scholars in the formative period of Sociology

and Social Anthropology in India. Their unique contributions to the discipline made the departments famous in India and the globe.

b. The scholars trained in the departments started or joined in the different sociology departments across the country.

c. Different scholars got inspired from the works of these founding fathers of these schools of thought and their academic traditions.

1.2.2 Major Schools of Thought

Here we examine two dominant schools, namely Bombay and Lucknow Schools and their institutional background, important scholars, and their contributions for the development of the discipline. Examination of the contribution of both Bombay and Lucknow Schools helps us to understand the relevance of their research and studies in the contemporary situations and also in the new context of development and transformations.

1.2.2.1 Bombay School of Sociology

The institutional development of sociology in India started in 1919 when the colonial government established a new sociology department in Bombay University. In 1919 under the leadership of Patrick Geddes, Bombay University introduced Sociology and Civics. This was a landmark event in the history of institutionalising Sociology in India. This Department was the oldest centre of teaching and research in Sociology in India. Besides, this department played an important role in the professionalisation of the discipline by the foundation of the *Indian Sociological Society* (1951) and by

publishing its journal *Sociological Bulletin* (1952) and the organisation of annual sociological conferences.

Patrick Geddes was the first professor of Civics and Sociology, who served as the Head of the Department from 1919 to 1924. Patrick Gedde*s* was an expert in urban development and planning and studied town planning in the cities such as Calcutta, Indore, etc. He incorporated different disciplinary perspectives, such as, Sociology, Biology, Geography and town planning to study human beings and their natural environment.

G.S Ghurye, another pioneer in the history of Bombay School, was a student of Geddes. He succeeded the headship of the Department in 1924 and continued till 1959 until he retired. In these thirty five years of his career he had published a number of books and monographs on different aspects of Indian society, such as caste, tribe, kinship, cities, religion, and culture. Along with this, he trained and guided a number of students in different fields of sociology. Most of his students took teaching positions in different departments in various parts of the country. Ghurye's deep knowledge in the Sanskrit texts and training in Indology helped him to develop a distinguished and productive career in Sociology.

Another dominant figure in Bombay School was A.R. Desai. He was a student of Ghurye and he used materialist interpretation of history to understand the Indian national movement and the emergence of nationalism in India. This application of Marxist perspective to understand Indian society led to the shifting of focus of the School from the Indological perspective of Ghurye to a new brand. He also made a significant contribution to the understanding of the Indian state in the post independent period and also analysed different kinds of movements during the 60s and 70s.

K.M. Kapadia and John Vincent Ferreira are two important sociologists from the Bombay school of Sociology. Both these scholars contributed to the development of Sociology in India. Kapadia was the Head of the Department of Sociology from 1959 to 1967. He integrated textual view and field view to understand Indian society. Ferreira's interest in theoretical and philosophical anthropology helped Bombay school to extend its domain of teaching and research. The contributions of Kapadia and Ferreira are under-recognized in the disciplinary history of Indian Sociology. Dhirendra Narain and Manorama Savur also contributed to the development of the discipline. Savur addressed environmental questions from a Marxist perspective.

The works of the above mentioned scholars of the Bombay School made a pioneering contribution to sociological research and teaching in India. It nurtured its own distinctive tradition by focusing on classical texts for understanding Indian social institutions. At the same time, the Bombay school realised the importance of fieldwork in understanding the changing nature of these institutions and its real time characteristics. They synthesised the sociological, Indological, and historical perspectives in their works. Through this synthesis the Bombay School instigated a critical engagement with colonial ethnography. It also initiated the development of India's indigenous intellectual tradition.

1.2.2.2 Lucknow School of Sociology

As we discussed, Lucknow played an important role in the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in the early 20th century. In 1921 Lucknow University started teaching the discipline of Sociology and Economics. This combined department of Economics and Sociology was headed by Radhakamal Mukherjee (1889–1968). Along with him, Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji (1894–1961), Dhirendra Nath Majumdar (1903–1960) and Awadh Kishor Saran (1922–2003) were the important figures in the Lucknow School of Sociology. With their contributions in different fields of Sociology and Social Anthropology they made Lucknow an influential centre of teaching and research.

The root of the Lucknow School lies in the anti-colonial national awakening and the independent movement. The Lucknow school's pioneers such as Radhakamal Mukherjee and Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji developed an interdisciplinary social science and they reinterpreted the concept of development and modernization in the first half of the 20th century itself.

Radhakamal Mukherjee was an influential scholar who laid the foundation for Sociology in Lucknow University. He started his career as an economist and transcended the boundaries of economics and tried to develop a transdisciplinary perspective in Social science. He contributed to the development of an indigenous Sociology and analysed Indian tradition in response to the challenge of western civilisation. He questioned the modern notion of progress and he criticised the taken for granted assumption about the westernisation of the eastern institutions. His 'institutional approach' emphasised the importance of human institutions in the formation of invisible unity of individuals, society and values.

Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji or DP joined Lucknow University in the year of 1922 as a lecturer in Economics and Sociology. He retired from the Department as professor and head in 1954. In his thirty two years of service he contributed to the development of Sociology and trained a generation of sociologists. He used Marxist methodology to understand Indian society and he was a

pioneer in the field of Sociology of culture. His interest in understanding Indian reality and its rootedness in tradition helped him to contribute to the development of an indigenous sociology in India.

Dhirendra Nath Majumdar, another pioneer in Indian Sociology and Social Anthropology contributed to the development of Lucknow School. He was a renowned Anthropologist from Cambridge University and the head of the department when Anthropology got independent status in Lucknow University. In the initial years in Lucknow, he taught 'primitive economics' in the department. He started a journal called *Eastern Anthropologist* which is one of the prominent journals in Anthropology.

Awadh Kishore Saran was another important figure in the Lucknow School. He completed both his graduation and postgraduation from Lucknow University and joined there as a lecturer in 1946. Twenty years of his academic engagement, as a teacher and researcher, at the Lucknow School, he contributed to a great extent for the development of Sociology and Anthropology.

Along with the critique of colonial ethnography and the indigenisation of Sociology in the Indian context, the Lucknow school developed distinctive traditions of their own. The scholars from Lucknow School paid attention to the philosophical underpinnings of Indian social reality. They engaged with the question of post-colonial social and economic reconstruction of the country.

Recap

- ♦ In post-independent India, the development of Sociology was an intellectual response of different Indian scholars.

- ♦ During the 19th and early 20th century Bombay and Lucknow were important centres of cultural and political renaissance in India.

- ♦ The contributions of ideologists, administrators, and missionaries helped for the development of sociology as a discipline.

- ♦ There are different intellectual traditions in the discipline of Sociology such as Bombay School, Lucknow School, and Mysore School etc.

- ♦ Different scholars got inspired from the works of these founding fathers of these schools of thought and their academic traditions.

- ♦ In 1919 under the leadership of Patrick Geddes, Bombay University introduced Sociology and Civics.

- ♦ In 1921 Lucknow University started teaching the discipline of Sociology and Economics.

- ♦ The Bombay School synthesised sociological, indological, and historical perspectives and instigated a critical engagement with colonial ethnography in their works.

- ♦ The scholars from Lucknow School paid attention to the philosophical underpinnings of Indian social reality.

Objective Questions

1. Which is the oldest centre of teaching and research in Sociology in India?

2. Who was the first professor of Civics and Sociology at Bombay University?

3. Who were the pioneers of the Bombay School of Sociology?

4. When was Sociology and Economics introduced at Lucknow University for study?

5. Who followed Marxist methodology at Bombay school and Lucknow school?

6. Who started a journal called *Eastern Anthropologist*?

7. Who said "It is only with India's independence, and with the launching of a programme of planned development that a widespread need was felt for sociological research."?

8. Which were the major centres of cultural and political renaissance during 19th and early 20th century India?

9. Which are the two dominant schools of thought in Sociology?

10. Who was the influential scholar who laid the foundation for Sociology in Lucknow University?

Answers

1. Bombay school of Sociology

2. Patrick Geddes

3. Patrick Geddes, G.S Ghurye, A.R. Desai, K.M. Kapadia ,John Vincent Ferreira, Dhirendra Narain, and Manorama Savur

4. 1921

5. A.R. Desai, Manorama Savur, Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji

6. Dhirendra Nath Majumdar

7. M.N.Srinivas

8. Bombay and Lucknow

9. Bombay and Lucknow

10. Radhakamal Mukherjee

Assignments

1. Bring out the Indian intellectual history in the formation of Sociological schools of thought.

2. Explain the role of Bombay and Lucknow as cultural centres during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

3. Describe the contributions of the pioneers of Sociology to Indian academic discipline.

4. Compare the intellectual composition of Bombay and Lucknow schools of thoughts.

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2

BLOCK

Indological and Textual Perspectives

UNIT 1

G.S. Ghurye: Caste and Kinship, Tribe, Culture and Civilisation

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ narrate the features of Indological perspective in Sociology

♦ expose ideological postulates employed by G. S Ghurye to study Indian caste system

♦ become familiar with Ghurye's cultural diffusionism

Prerequisites

If you visit an art gallery, you can see various drawings, paintings, and so on. Most probably, it reproduces social life and culture in the form of the arts. Similar to painting or any other art, writing, or book, they are reflections of particular ages, social status, problems, etc. In the study of the history of a region or country, early historical writing will provide historical data on particular social situations. In the study of the history of India, classical texts and ancient texts, the sanskrit puranas, played a major role.

Similarly, Greek, Chinese, and Arab traders and travellers have written about Indian culture from around the 3rd century BC onwards. Indika by Megasthenes (Greek) dates back to the 3rd century BC. Chinese travellers like Fa Hein and Xuan Zang and Arab travellers like Al Baruni and Ibn Battuta have also produced remarkable works on Indian culture. Some of them were more than mere travel accounts, with interesting observations on society and its various practices. More prolific writing about India began with missionary activities. and followed by the colonial administrative records, which provide the vital record of Indian social status. The pioneers of Indian sociology, G.S. Ghurye and Dumont, used these textual views to analyse Indian socio-cultural situations. This unit will provide an understanding of Ghurye's indological approach.

Keywords

Diffusionism, Brahminical influence, Acculturation, Caste hierarchy

Discussion

Indology found its place in the French and German universities along with the Oriental studies, an academic discipline committed to study the history and culture of the East. The German Indologists made extensive study of literature and culture in India. The German Indologist, Max Muller translated the most complicated work among the Vedas, Rigveda. Missionaries, colonisers and Orientalists are the advocates of indological perspective. The Indological studies as a discipline took proper shape under these influences and provided a considerable amount of information on Indian culture. Based on these materials, the Indological perspective was formed influencing historians, sociologists, anthropologists and linguists. Sociology especially was highly influenced by this perspective and works of many early sociologists like Louis Dumont, G. S. Ghurye, Irawati Karve, and K. M. Kapadia. Dumont and Pocock believed that sociology in India lies at the point of confluence of Sociology and Indology.

Generally, an indological perspective is defined as the branch dealing with the interpretation of ancient texts and linguistic studies of problems of ancient Indian culture. This perspective studies Indian society through the ancient religious texts and other materials like the various administrative records, travel accounts, and even architecture and folk literature. This perspective holds that Indian civilization is unique. For a sociologist influenced by the Indological perspective, Indian society and its various institutions like caste, marriage, family, and so on are best understood through the various textual sources than through direct field work.

In Sociology, generally and specifically in the Indological perspective, Dumont and Ghurye stand out. The contributions of both Ghurye and Dumont to Sociology in India is of much significance. In shaping the sociological understanding of Indian civilization, especially caste, family, kinship, religion and so on, the contribution of the two is unmatched. They were able to bring deeper insights into society and its institutions, especially caste, developing a descriptive study of the system from its origin to their time.

Most sociologists within an Indological sphere saw the Indian society for its ideologies, depicted in the ancient texts. The reality of inequality, diversity and exploitation are often ignored. As for Ghurye's work, the orientalist construction of Aryan invasion theory is uncritically accepted. Indian society is the product of 'Vedic civilisation' and Indian civilisation is the Hindu, brahminical civilisation. Equation of Varna with caste is also seen in works of Ghurye, owing to the fact that he worked with classical literature that was concerned with Varna.

2.1.1 G.S. Ghurye

G.S. Ghurye was considered the father of Indian sociology. He majored in English and Sanskrit during graduation and post-graduation. His Sanskrit education exposed him to a wide range of ancient Indian texts, inspiring in him an interest in the evolution and nature of civilisations, especially in the Indian sub-continent. For him, History and Sociology are almost identical, and a sociologist should

be concerned with the task of exploring the social history of the past. For Ghurye, the source of India's social history was classical religious literature. He set out to study Sociology under the guidance of Leonard T. Hobhouse, but had to complete his studies under W. H. R. Rivers, an anthropologist. The guidance convinced Ghurye that "the anthropological approach to Sociology was the most appropriate one."

Fig 2.1.1 G.S. Ghurye

Under the influence of Rivers, Haddon, and Smith, Ghurye was convinced of India's rich civilization history. He was certain that Indian civilisational history had much to contribute to the study of social institutions and their development in the past. As a sociologist who was heavily drawn towards the evolution and growth of Indo-aryan society, he worked on about four thousand years of civilisational change. This evolutionary interest cannot be pursued without the help of indology. For this purpose, Ghurye utilised the knowledge and reading of Sanskritic literature, the colonial records and other Indological materials that provided information on the evolution and development of Indian civilisation. Ghurye relied less on the indological works of British writers and more on the writings of indologists at the Bhandarkar Institute of Bombay. According to Ghurye, knowledge of Sanskrit literature was considered crucial to anyone doing sociology in India.

His interdisciplinary shift reflected a strong interest in the subject, and he contributed to sociological research through his works as well as the institutionalisation and professionalisation of Sociology in India.

We will further discuss on his indological approach by looking at how he was able to develop the concepts of

♦ Caste and Kinship

♦ Tribes

♦ Culture and Civilisation

Ghurye has worked on these themes, relying highly on textual data, especially from the Vedic literature and other ancient texts, while tracing its evolution.

2.1.2 Caste and Kinship

G. S. Ghurye and his works on caste have been influenced by his historical evolutionary approach as well as diffusionism. There is no romanticisation or dismissal of caste in his writing, but a genuine attempt to study the history and evolution of the caste system through time. He relied on ancient texts for this and was adamant that history is important in sociology and that this history can be accessed through these ancient texts. His first and one of the most popular works, *Caste and Race in India* , is focused on caste and kinship in India.

For Ghurye, caste was an outcome of historical processes. His strong affiliation to historical evolution is evident in his construction of caste and kinship throughout his books. Through a detailed descriptive study of the ancient texts, he traces out the caste in India through the ages. In his work on caste, he mentions the "features of Hindu society that are governed by the social philosophy of caste" .

Even if the Hindus are part of a larger community, they are identified by their varna or caste, such as Nair, Tiyan, or Brahmin, before they identify as Keralite, Indian, or even Hindu. According to Ghurye "castes

are complete social worlds in themselves, marked off definitely from one another, though subsisting within the larger society".

Ghurye highlights six structural features of the caste system, as follows:

a. Segmental Division of Society

Ghurye describes how society is divided into various segments based on caste. It is purely determined by birth. The castes had their own rules and regulations that every member should follow. A person born in a pulaya family will remain a pulaya. The caste also determines your status in the society despite your economic conditions.

b. Hierarchy

The practice of the social precedence of one caste over another is innate to the caste system in India. For example, the Brahmins hold the highest position in the hierarchy, and below them are the Kshatriyas. The untouchables are the lowest in the hierarchy. The caste between these varies in their position from region to region. In Northern India, the barber caste assumes a relatively higher position in the hierarchy than the same caste in South India. Despite this variation, the caste system follows a general hierarchy of Brahmins at the highest and untouchables at the lowest.
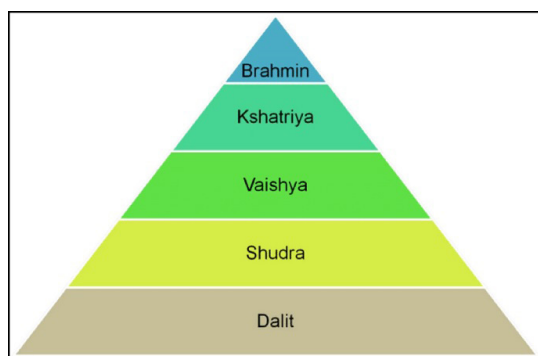

Fig 2.1.2 Hierarchy of Caste system

c. Restrictions on Feeding and Social Intercourse

The people in the different regions of India observed the restrictions on feeding and social intercourse in their own respects. For example, the lower caste, referred to as the untouchables, is subject to strict rules of untouchability. In Kerala, even their shadow and presence are deemed to be polluting. There were rules of distance that various castes had to maintain with the upper caste in order to avoid polluting them. A kshatriya man was not allowed within 12 feet of a Namboodiri Brahmin, and an increasing scale of distance was followed for other castes.

Similar restrictions apply to inter-dining practices. In the South, Pulaya and Paraya caste members were not allowed to enter the houses of other castes or dine with any other caste. Only Ksatriyas belonging to the Varma caste were allowed to enter and dine in the mana or illam of Brahmins. In the northern parts of India, Brahmins accepted food from other castes if it was pucca food, i.e., cooked in ghee, whereas kachha food, i.e., cooked in water, was not accepted by other castes. This system was non-existent in East and South Bengal, Gujarat, and the whole of South India, where a person would accept food only from a fellow caste member. He described the concept of pollution as placing severe restrictions on the extent of social interaction.

d. Civil & Religious Disabilities and Privileges of the Different Sections

The villages were divided into quarters with entry restrictions for certain castes or caste groups. Southern India observed a division of villages into quarters for different castes, or at least into areas for dominant castes, sudras and panchamas. In Northern

India, contrary to this, only the impure castes were segregated and made to live on the outskirts of the village. In some areas, the movement restrictions were mutual that the lower caste would not permit a Brahmin to enter their street. The civil restrictions also extended to accessibility to wells, prescription of housing materials, clothing options, and so on. Women in South India were not allowed to cover their upper bodies if they were Tiya, or any other lower caste. The breast tax was imposed on women who covered their upper body in front of upper caste members until 1865.

e. Lack of Choice of Occupation

The caste determines the vocation of its members. The caste members did not allow the members of the other castes to take up their vocation.In the general system it was prescribed that the son of a barber would become a barber and the son of a carpenter would become a carpenter. There has been a practical shift in the restrictions placed as far as occupation is concerned, except for certain roles like the priesthood. There is also an observed unwillingness to take up roles of the lower castes like disposal of corpses or toddy-tapping by any other caste.

f. Restrictions on Marriage

Endogamy, or the practice of marrying within one's own caste or subcaste, was a prominent feature of the caste system. There too, there are exceptions where hypergamy is permitted. In this, an upper caste man can take a lower caste wife. For example, the eldest son of the Namboothiri Brahmin family married a Brahmin woman. The other sons could enter into an informal marriage arrangement called "sambandham", with Nair women. The eldest son was also permitted to have "sambandham" along with his Brahmin wife. But beyond these small exceptions that are regional, failure to stick to the endogamy

rules, even within their own sub castes, will lead to expulsion of the person from their original caste or other punishments prescribed by the caste council.

In his book *Caste and Race in India,* Ghurye conducts a comparative study of caste and kinship practises outside of India. He attempts to draw similarities between the caste and kinship rules in various civilisations to understand their integrative role. Ghurye elaborates on sub-caste endogamic practices, and gotra, or clan exogamic practises to develop caste and kin restrictions. The gotras are believed to be related by blood, so members of the same gotra cannot marry. His further research on kinship practices in India and its parallels across the European world is available in his work *Family and Kin in Indo-European Culture*.

Ghurye's sociological method that combines comparative, sociological and historical perspectives is visible through his works, where he draws upon the historical development of various social institutions and studies it in comparison with their parallels across the globe. Thus he works through an Indological approach with the historical data being provided by the ancient literature and other indological materials. He has observed kinship practices and terms in the Sanskrit, Greek and Latin traditions. He observes the similarity in the term "pati"of Sanskrit, "posis" in Old Greek and "patis" in Lithuanian. The term meaning master, signified to him a possibility of the role of the husband as the master of the wife. Additionally he notes that the early Latin designated wife as married one, "marita". The sanskrit-derived languages like Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati also have designations like "bahu", "vahu" or "vohti" for wife. This he claims could be the possibility of changes in the role of the wife from the mistress to the new member of the family under the care of the elders. Through this observation he makes a comparison of cultural configuration as

well as a track of developmental changes in all these traditions. Ghurye uses his method of cultural historical sociology to develop his ideas of caste and kinship in India, concluding the two as integral to studying the society especially in India.

2.1.3 Tribe

Ghurye's interest in Tribes of India can be traced through two of his works: *The Scheduled Tribes of India* (first published as *The Aborigines "So-called" and their Future*) (1943, 1959, 1963) and *The Burning Caldron of North East India* (1980). The first book on tribes, *The Aborigines "So-called" and their Future*(1943) was written as a response to Verrier Elwin's Loss of Nerve (1941). Elwin(1941), who advocated for the isolation of tribes from the Hindu community, Contrasting this view, Ghurye believed that the tribes of India needed to be integrated into the Hindu community to enable an enhancement of their status.

Ghurye's conception of the tribe was influenced by his nationalism. He made a comparative study of the world nations, who integrated multiple cultures that existed in the region in the process of nation-building. To him, the natural 'assimilation of smaller groups of cultures into the larger ones' is crucial to nation building. The tribes, like the lower caste are expected to assimilate into Sanskritic Hindu society. The British, by classifying and treating them as separate, have blocked this process. He negated the cultural distinction between caste groups and tribes put forth by Elwin and the British administration. Rather, he claimed tribes to be an 'imperfectly integrated class of Hindu society' or 'Backward Hindus'.

Ghurye presents details of the various practices of the tribes in Central India who have adopted Hinduism. To establish this adoption of Hinduism by tribes, he quotes from reports and writings about "Bhuiyas",

"Gonda", and so on. He mentions the one rock depiction of Emperor Ashoka, throwing light on his tribal policies to show that the merger of tribes with the Hindus has for long been in process.

His later work on North-East India, T*he Burning Caldron of North-East India* (1980), advocated the integration of the tribes of North-East India to the larger Indian society through administrative measures of the Indian state. He identified the cultural differences of the north- eastern tribes and the impossibility of integrating them to a Hindu society. There were observed tendencies among the Nagas to separate them from mainland India. The Hydari agreement between the Nagas and the Government of India also gave hope for autonomy to Nagas. According to Ghurye,the formation of separate states like Nagaland, Tripura Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram has increased the tendency for independence and harmed national unity according to Ghurye. Numerous problems of backwardness among the tribes, in his opinion, are similar to the poorer sections of society. He opined that improved contact with Hindu society, which had a better quality of life, would naturally cause these tribes to adopt practices that would uplift them. The policies like scheduled tribe status would be a hindrance to this natural merger that is bound to happen.

From both his works on tribes, we could see that Ghurye believed that we could truly unite as a nation only through the integration of the tribes in Central India through Hinduisation and in North East India through administrative action. He claimed, 'The usage of this word (Adivasi) has done incalculable harm and in doing so, to the cause of bringing about some kind of harmony among the many races and peoples, some of whom have been inhabiting this country for more than four thousand years'. Ghurye's concern with the distinction of the tribes from caste was its challenge to

the national unity that he held so close to his heart.

2.1.4 Culture and Civilisation

Ghurye's comparative study of cultural affinity between various Indo-European cultures contains descriptive accounts of various cultural practices like religions, burial rituals, languages and so on. Ghurye was influenced by W.H.R.Rivers with his concept of cultural diffusionism. This concept prescribes that cultures have a single origin and through contact it has spread through communities. Ghurye's perspectives in the study of culture prescribed the diffusionist idea that the history of a culture is not within the country and we must look beyond the region to understand this. A significant portion of his publications are concerned with the common foundations of culture in all societies. The two articles, "*The Disposal of Human Placenta*" and "*Megalithic Remains in India*'' are focused on comparing the cultural traits that could throw light on the possibility of diffusion of culture.

Ghurye, in developing the concept of culture and civilisation, strongly adhered to the Indo-Aryan and Brahminical influences in the maintenance of cultural unity. He believed that the non-aryan cultures that were in practice within India underwent acculturation to integrate into the Aryan culture that developed into the Indian civilisation. Acculturation is the process by which a culture adapts or borrows traits from either the prevailing culture of the society or the cultural environment they wish to adapt to. The major deities of India - Shiva, Vishnu, and Shakti-were symbols of ethnic groups which were incorporated into a single religious complex.

Ghurye studies culture and civilisation, respectively, as the individual and collective expression of the same phenomenon. According to him, 'Culture is civilisation assimilated and made operative in individual minds and practices'. The ideals and values of a civilization form the culture that is expressed through the actions of its individuals. He concludes civilization as a "collective endeavour of humanity" and this is reflected in his work *Occidental Civilization*, where he makes an analysis of western civilisation. The rise and fall of civilisation is a consequence of the "steady growth of culture." He establishes certain values that form the foundations of culture.

These five values are:

1. Religious consciousness

2. Conscience

3. Justice

4. Free pursuit of knowledge and free expression

5. Toleration

As for civilisation, the four grades of civilisation are observed as civilised, highly civilised, very highly civilised, and completely civilised. Ghurye draws four conclusions from these four divisions. First, he claims that no society has yet reached the stage of being completely civilised or very highly civilised. Secondly, Ghurye frames this as a linear progress towards perfection, and the future holds a very high civilisation. Thirdly, the distribution of values figures into this division of stages. High civilisation reflected a wider acceptance of humanitarian and cultural values. Fourthly, all stages possess distinctive attributes that crystallise to give the culture a distinctive character. So different stages of civilisation will have different cultures that will control individual's actions. He also observes in relation to culture and civilisation that culture is individual attainment and the more individuals excel in their attainments, the richer civilisation becomes.

Recap

- The Indological perspective or the textual perspective studies Indian social institutions through the ancient texts like the Puranas, Vedas and so on.

- Ghurye, K.M. Kapadia, Irawati Karve, and Louis Dumont were famous sociologists who followed an Indological approach.

- Ghurye identified features of Hindu caste society and claimed that caste and kinship play an integrative role in civilisations.

- Ghurye describes the segmental division of society as "caste society was not a more or less homogenous community".

- In Indian society, there was a caste-based hierarchy with brahmins at the top and shudras at the bottom.

- Ghurye emphasised that choices of vocation were ascribed and static.

- Ghurye used the method of "cultural historical sociology" to develop the ideas of caste and kinship in India.

- Ghurye advocated the integration of tribes into Indian society through Hinduisation and administrative measures, with the goals of a unified nation.

- Ghurye's study of culture and civilisation was influenced by cultural diffusionism.

- Ghurye focused on finding common cultural foundations among Indo-European cultures.

- Ghurye considered Indian society the result of the integration of non-Aryan cultures into the Aryan culture.

Objective Questions

1. Who is referred to as the father of Indian sociology?

2. Which is Ghurye's first book on caste?

3. According to Ghurye, which is an exogamous community?

4. *The Aborigines So-called and their Future* was written as a response to which book?

5. Which category in Indian society does Ghurye mention the "Imperfectly integrated class of Hindu society"?

6. Which was Ghurye's book on the North-east tribes of India?

7. Which civilisation was the theme of Ghurye's *Occidental Civilisation*?

8. Which term is defined as civilisation assimilated and made operative in individual minds and practices?

9. Which term is defined as "a culture adapts or borrows traits from either prevailing culture of a society"?

10. Which caste was at the top of the hierarchy of the caste system?

Answers

1. G.S Ghurye

2. *Caste and Race in India*

3. Gotras

4. *Loss of Nerve* by Verrier Elwin

5. Tribe

6. *The Burning Caldron of North-East India*

7. Western civilisation

8. Culture

9. Acculturation

10. Brahmin

Assignments

1. Analyse Ghurye's ideology to examine the characteristics of Indian society.

2. Explain Ghurye's perspectives on cultural diffusionism.

3. Describe the ideas of caste and kinship in India.

4. "The Indian tribes are an imperfectly integrated class of Hindu society." Evaluate the quotes given by Ghurye.

5. Describe the evolution of the Indological approach in the sociology discipline.

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2 UNIT

Louis Dumont: Homo Hierarchicus, Purity and Impurity

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ familiarise the contribution and methodology of Dumont

♦ understand the concept of caste and kinship system in India.

♦ explain the theorisation of hierarchy and the concept of purity and impurity given by Dumont

Prerequisites

Purity and impurity are concepts that have long guided human behaviour. Across cultures and throughout history, people have developed intricate systems of ritual and taboos around ideas of cleanliness, propriety, and spiritual fitness. The French anthropologist Louis Dumont devoted much of his career to studying these notions of purity and impurity and how they shape social hierarchies.

In his influential 1966 book *Homo Hierarchies*, Dumont argues that separating the pure from the impure is one of the fundamental ways that human societies organise themselves. He illustrates this with examples like the caste system in India, where contact with certain people or objects is seen as polluting. Dumont shows how beliefs about purity and pollution reinforce divisions between classes, genders, and other social groups. His insights reveal how notions of the sacred and profane regulate not just religious life but social life as well. Even in modern secular societies, these ancient concepts still influence practices like hygiene, sexual norms, and racial discrimination.

Keywords

Hierarchy, Pollution, Purity, Kinship, Evolution

Discussion

2.2.1 Louis Dumont

Fig 2.2.1 Louis Dumont

Dumont was a French sociologist and an Indologist. He studied German and also learnt Sanskrit. He concentrated on India and the west and was mostly interested in the caste system's ideology. To analyse Indian society, he used indological and structural techniques,historical and cognitive approaches,and dialectic transformational relationships. He made an effort to examine Hindu social institutions and their practices, either by making reference to sacred scriptures or by examining the current activities.

As an anthropologist, Dumont saw sociology and Indology as the combining forces that could make sociology possible in India. His study of the caste system, especially, was highly based on Indological materials. Similar to Ghurye, Dumont too was able to make crucial contributions through an Indological approach to the study of the caste system in India. Dumont identified the ideology behind caste through Vedic texts and Manusmriti. For this ideology, he used structuralism to study caste as a system. He thinks of caste as an institution, contrary to the Western scholars who think of caste as an anomaly to their idea of equality. "Hierarchy"

is central to his conception of caste. Hierarchy, for Dumont, ranks the elements of the whole in relation to the whole. This view of the whole, with respect to caste, is provided by religion. To understand the religion of Indian civilization, he uses his familiarity with the Sanskrit texts generated during his training under Marcel Mauss, a sanskritist. Dumont's primary understanding of caste hierarchy is through the opposition of purity to impurity, which he derives from the Vedic scriptures and *ManuSmriti*. He stresses that the need to understand the ideology and then reduce it to its structure, for his chosen approach was an indological one.

The major themes in the works of Dumont can be identified as:

♦ Hierarchy

♦ Caste and Varna system

♦ Kinship and marriage

♦ Purity and impurity

♦ Individualism and holism

2.2.2 Homo Hierarchicus

Dumont concerned himself with ideology, structure, and hierarchy while studying caste. He attempted to study the ideology through ancient texts and position it in relation to lived reality. He believed Indology to be the source text that would help a sociologist with insights on collective representations with respect to caste. The notions of ideology and tradition that he derives from ancient texts are critical to his caste paradigm. For this, he introduces structuralism, placing

the caste as a regulated system or whole.

Homo Hierarchicus was published in 1966 in French, and the translated version in English was published in 1970. In his complete edition, Dumont makes a well-founded account of the caste system in India. Dumont moves from ethnographic data to ancient texts in order to place caste and its governing ideas in his time. He critiques the western understanding of caste as a deviation from normal and notes that 'the very authors who have devoted books to it have more often tried to explain the system as an anomaly than understand it as an institution'. Central to the work is the concept of hierarchy that he places in opposition to the ideals of equality in the west. We must understand this book as a movement towards a theory of hierarchy through a textually constructed image of caste.

He borrows from Celestin Bougle to define the caste system as "dividing the whole society into a large number of hereditary groups, and distinguished from one another and connected together by three characteristics: separation in matters of marriage and contact, whether direct or indirect(food); division of labour, each group having, in theory or by tradition, a profession from which its members can depart only within certain limits; and finally hierarchy, which ranks the groups as relatively superior or inferior to one another. Dumont's works elaborate on both indological works and the ancient texts to study the religious and social evolution of the caste system.

a) Hierarchy

In Dumont's work, *Homo Hierarchicus*, begins by understanding the concept of hierarchy and caste and then studying them in relation to each other. His view on hierarchy describes it as the principle by which elements of a whole are ranked in relation to the whole. Motivated by his appeal for holism, Dumont holds it central that we have a view of the whole. That is, while studying caste, we must look at the whole caste system rather than the individual castes. This view, according to him, is reflected in the majority of societies through their religions. This provides him with the ground that the ranking in a caste society would thus be religious in nature. He links the binary of purity and impurity to understand the principle of hierarchy, which will be discussed in detail in the later part of the text.

Beyond the hierarchy of pure and impure, the traditional varna system has a hierarchy of four varnas or colours. This determined the power and status in society. The four varnas in order of hierarchy are namely,

♦ Brahmins or priests

♦ Kshatriyas or warriors

♦ Vaishyas or merchants

♦ Shudras or servants or have-nots

And outside the classification are the untouchables. Dumont warns that one must keep the varna and caste distinct, as is often mistaken by most indologists as the same. He observes that most studies of his times fail to find the connection between the varna system as in the ancient texts and its reflection in the society of their time. He understands from the various ancient texts that in the varna theory, status and power is distinguished. He brings this out through the spiritual authority and temporal authority of brahmins and kshatriyas, where the spiritual authority rests with brahmins while they are temporally submissive to the power of kshatriyas, who are the kings or rulers.

In relation to caste and varna, Dumont opines that 'far from being heterogeneous, the concepts of varna and jati have interacted and certain features of osmosis between the two may be noticed'. The concept of varna and jati share the idea of "keeping

apart", which often causes the confusion of the two while studying the caste system. The varna system designates a functional position in the hierarchy as rulers or priests, accepting their inferior or superior position with respect to other varnas. The jati on the other hand follows heredity over function. It is assigned by birth. In the caste system, the jati and their occupation called "kula thozhil" will determine the varna they belong to. For example warrior sub-castes among Nairs belong to the Kshatriya varna, while few other sub-castes among Nairs belong to vaishyas and even Shudras.

b) Division of Labour

Through his lens of holism, Dumont studies the interdependence and specialisation of caste. He believes that the specialisation of the castes into multiple professions is oriented towards the whole, thus creating an interdependence. The interdependence of caste has been studied, but in relation to its empirical setting, that is, the village. While he stresses on the relationship between caste and profession, he does remind us that the caste system should never be equated with the trade guild. According to Dumont, 'on the general scale of relative purity, features which are deemed professional carry great weight compared with features not connected with profession'. Agreeing with McKim Marriott, he brings out that an activity is deemed more polluting if made professional, than when practised as a household activity.

Dumont also takes the jajmani system as the basic system of division of labour in traditional India. The Jajmani system is a social and economic arrangement, wherein certain caste groups offer service to a land owning upper caste family in return for accommodation, food and protection. The landowners are called jajmans. On this note, he classifies the castes as landowners and those who do not own any land. The land owners form the dominant caste and the other caste obtain the means of subsistence with their direct or indirect relation with the dominant caste. In Kerala, the land owning castes were the Namboothiri or Brahmins and the rest of the castes had rights of tenancy, and occupation in the order of hierarchy. The Nairs and Ezhavas had rights of cultivation in varying order and they paid a lease amount or harvest to the landowners. The pulayas, parayas, and other agricultural slaves were only allotted accommodation and food in exchange for agricultural labour.

Dumont concludes that the link between caste and profession remains loose among the agricultural functions but is stronger among the specialist castes with religious functions or with forced labour, as in the case of untouchables. This can be understood with reference to the priesthood of Brahmins, scavengers or toddy tappers among untouchables. The Brahmins retained their autonomy in the priestly functions and maintained strict ban on other castes performing priestly rituals. Similarly, the untouchable caste like the chandalas are traditionally assigned the role of disposal of corpses. We find that these professional functions are strictly restricted to the caste members. Each caste member was contributing to the society through a caste role assigned to them. Everybody had a part to play in maintaining societal functions. For example, the agricultural labourers thought of their labour as their duty to keep the village from hunger. They did not question the hierarchy. Instead identified their roles as crucial in the overall functioning of the society. The orientation toward the whole, in the village community, legitimises the respective position of the participants in their minds. The position of the caste members is legitimised through the religious scriptures and so the people do not question this hierarchy. He claims that the division of labour in the caste system 'deduces interdependence from religion'.

c) Separation

The concept of separation is crucial to characteristics of caste. Dumont traces separation in terms of marriage practices as well as contact through touch or food. This separation is studied on the basis of classical texts and theories and also on the ethnography data that has been collected across South and North of India. Dumont had extensive research done especially on hierarchy and marriage practices in South India.

On marriage, Dumont bases his study on his observations from South India, mainly Tamil Nadu, and from North India, mainly Uttar Pradesh. He starts his notes on marriage by identifying the importance of marriage and its nature in both the southern and northern parts of India. The significance placed by Indian society on marriage is explored through the marriage ceremonies. The dignity of marriage ceremonies across castes and across regions shows the importance of marriage in Indian society. He also looks at marriage as the factor that connects the two main features of Indian society: caste and kinship.

The castes in all parts of India maintained endogamy. They did not marry to any caste higher or lower to their caste in the hierarchy. Marrying between the castes would affect the hierarchical system as the caste of the parents determine the caste of the child. For the caste hierarchy, it is important that the members maintain the caste purity by practising caste endogamy. The only exceptions to this rule were in the cases of secondary marriages, concubines and remarriage. As mentioned earlier, the eldest son is allowed to marry a Nair woman, if he has a son through his Brahmin wives. His observations of marriage, brings him to say that instead of identifying endogamy as the simple regulation in Hindu marriages, we must apply to it two principles,

1. Endogamy is to be seen as a corollary of the primary principle, hierarchy.

2. The primary marriage or the first marriage must be seen distinct from the secondary marriage, subsequent to widowhood and illegitimate unions.

Concluding on the marriage practices, he deduces endogamy as 'An implication of hierarchy than an independent principle'.

The other form of separation is contact, both direct and indirect. The direct contact pertains to the rules of untouchability. Through the various Indological texts and his own observations, Dumont generalises untouchability on two grounds: religious inferiority and material oppression. The members of the untouchable caste belonged to a lower religious position. They had restrictions on taking part in religious functions, entering religious places, etc. They also lacked socio-economic privileges like freedom of movement, land ownership, and so on. Their labour was also exploited by the landowning upper caste as the untouchables were bound to serve them or be punished even by death. When it comes to indirect pollution, he discusses serving and consumption of food as well as drinks (water). He makes observations of how interdining restrictions extend to the vessels and methods used in cooking (kacha and pucca). The fried food made using ghee is called pucca food and is less polluting than the kacha food, or the boiled food cooked in water. He also finds vegetarianism and other food practices in the Manu and Vedas. In the case of observations regarding contact among caste Hindus, Dumont juxtaposes the theoretical data of the various census reports with the lived reality of the various caste practices in India.

2.2.3 Purity and Impurity

Dumont views caste as a "state of mind" that forms within groups of varying orders, generally referred to as caste. Though the caste appears unified from the outside, the divisions within are numerous. The elements are many and vary within the caste system, and Dumont believes that the study of these will not provide the necessary understanding of the caste system. Thus, he argues, we must attempt to start the study of the caste system not from the constituent elements but from the system that governs the elements.

Caste as a system has to be seen in both an empirical and an ideological sense. The ideology behind the caste system as prescribed by the religion has to be studied separately from the practised caste system. Dumont's initial view of the caste system could be a set of castes that are found in a certain area, forming a concrete whole in itself. This is the empirical observation of the caste system. But when viewed in isolation, we deduce some common principles on which these regionally varied concrete holes rest. The system becomes one of ideas and values, and we must primarily try to understand the ideology that rules the caste system. Dumont believes that we must begin with ideology and then consider the observed data and thus bring to light the residual component.

Dumont proceeds to understand the caste system by grasping the principles and then reducing it to the structure. In this way, he bases the three characteristics of caste: hierarchy, separation and division of labour on the principle of opposition of pure and impure. 'The whole is founded on the necessary opposition and hierarchical coexistence of the two opposites'.

a. Temporary Impurity to Permanent Impurity

Dumont begins with the general view, invoking the separation of caste, especially at the extremes, the Brahmins and the Untouchables. He observes that the separation, at first sight, may seem to be a question of hygiene but is actually a religious notion. The idea of temporary impurity in the life of a Hindu in relation to their organic life is what Dumont identifies as the reason behind this concept of purity and impurity. In his understanding, the specialised engagement with tasks that lead to temporary impurity, leads to the permanent impurity of a certain group.

Dumont brings out the general conception of impurity that gets attached to various life events like birth, death and other personal events across the world. The persons affected are temporarily secluded and this seclusion is not exclusive to Hindu society. Parallels can be drawn from Polynesia, and some practices in Catholicism. But Hinduism stands apart with the specialisation of these tasks to certain groups, burdening them with the impurity permanently. The notion of opposition between pure and impure goes hand in hand with the religious division of the labour. The level of impurity of the group or a caste is attached to the impurity of profession. The castes like Chandalas and chamars who deal with corpses and animal skin, respectively are considered to occupy the lowest of the ranks. While the other ideas of impurity are concerned with risking the health of persons in contact, the Hindu caste system attaches to it a notion of fall of status.

Dumont elaborates on the ancient text, Manusmriti, to provide the historical data that outlines the impurity causing events and the purification methods. The impurity causing activities are generally related to birth, death, menstruation and so on. These form the temporary impurity while the permanent association or failure to perform purification methods becomes a matter of permanent impurity. The funeral priests like the barbers in the South are burdened with the association with funerals and the linen used at birth and

menstruation is washed by the washerman in all of India, except Maratha, pushing these castes to the permanency of impurity. Purification methods and their regulations are also mentioned by Manu. For example, Manu prescribes a certain amount of time that one has to wait in order to take the purification bath. The terminal bath must be taken in running water, fully clothed. This is observed in the 'srardham' rituals in South India. Men are often seen to shave their head as a purification ritual along with the terminal bath.

Dumont deduces that the purity of the Brahmin and the impurity of the untouchable is conceptually inseparable and could indicate a unified establishment or reinforcement, thus requiring us to think of it together. He makes a significant observation that the 'untouchability will not disappear until the purity of the brahmin is itself radically devalued.

b. Multiplication of Criteria

The opposition of purity and impurity raises the question of how it accounts for the indefinite number of castes. This can be understood by the variation of purity with respect to the superior and inferior.

For example, a vegetarian has superior purity to a non-vegetarian, while among non-vegetarians, the variations depend on the purity attached to the meat consumed. Meat from a domestic pig or domestically reared animal is considered more impure than meat from a hunted animal. The series of dichotomies—one separating a caste group as superior and the other separating them from the inferior—create a linear order of these caste groups.

Regional variation to the functions associated with various castes also determine the varying relative position of the same group of people in different regions. For example, a barber assigned with the role of funeral priest in the South is relatively more impure than the barbers in the north who are free of this function.

Dumont draws the conclusion that purity and pollution are the governing ideology hierarchy in Hindu society and the Brahmins who form the highest caste stand the highest risk of being polluted. The ceremonial purity of the higher caste had to be maintained from the pollution through the impurity of the lower castes and this makes way for the various practices that determine the separation of the castes creating a hierarchy.

Recap

- ♦ Dumont views caste as an institution.

- ♦ "Hierarchy" is central to his conception of the caste system.

- ♦ Hierarchy, for Dumont, ranks the elements of the whole in relation to the whole.

- ♦ The Varna system links power to hierarchy, which is determined by the oppositions of purity and impurity.

- ♦ Endogamy and separation of contact through food or water is also practised to maintain hierarchy.

- Dumont claims that caste, the separation of pure and impure, is a religious notion and a professional specialisation in impure tasks that leads to temporary impurity.

- Dumont generalises untouchability based on two factors: material oppression and religious inferiority.

- The purity of the Brahmin and the impurity of the untouchable have to be viewed in unison, indicating a unified establishment or a reinforcement of each other.

- Multiplicity of practices that will determine the purity and impurity of a caste is the reason for the various hierarchical sub castes within caste groups.

Objective Questions

1. In which year was the English version of *Homo Hierarchicus* published?

2. Which theory of Dumont does develop in relation to the caste system in his work *Homo Hierarchicus?*

3. From which philosopher does Dumont borrow the defined characteristics of caste?

4. Which Varna maintained the highest position in the Varna system?

5. Which caste was left out of the Varna classification system?

6. According to Dumont, what was the corollary of the primary principle of caste hierarchy?

7. Which type of food is mentioned as the most polluting food in inter dining restrictions based on cooking method?

8. What does Dumont propose as a way to reduce interdependence from religion?

9. Who holds the opinion that the caste system is defined by the idea of a fundamental opposition between the "pure and the impure"?

10. What term does Dumont use to describe the restriction on social intercourse?

Answers

1. 1970

2. Theory of hierarchy

3. Celestin Bougle

4. Brahmins

5. Untouchables

6. Endogamy

7. Kaccha food

8. Division of labour

9. Louis Dumont

10. Separation

Assignments

1. Differentiate between temporary impurity and permanent impurity.
2. Evaluate Dumont's ideas of holism to analyse the hierarchical structure of the caste system.
3. Analyse the concept of "separation" in caste and kinship systems in India.
4. What is "*Homo Hierarchicus*" according to Dumont? Elaborate on his idea of caste hierarchy.

Suggested Readings

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BLOCK 3

Structural Functionalism

UNIT 1

M.N. Srinivas: Sanskritisation, Dominant Caste

Learning Outcomes

After completing the unit, the learner will be able to

- explain the structural functionalist approach and its influence in Indian sociology
- analyse the contributions of M. N. Srinivas to Indian sociology through structural functionalism
- examine the dimensions of sanskritisation in Indian Sociology

Prerequisites

Imagine a human body. What are the different body parts in a human being? What are the functions of these body parts? Do the functions specify the structure of these body parts? Do the functions of the body parts specify the structure of a human body? Anyway it is clear that the functions and structure of the human body parts are related to the structure of a human being. Hence it is significant to understand the function and structure of these body parts to understand a human body. Likewise, does society have a structure? What would be the parts which mould the structure of a society? The different parts such as social, political, economic, religious sectors of the society moulds the social structure. Therefore, it is important to understand the functions of these different sectors of the society to analyse the social structure of a society. Herbert Spencer, a sociologist, observed that similar to the various organs functioning together to maintain the body, the parts of society perform their functions to maintain society. These parts of society are religion, family, government, education and so on. M.N. Srinivas is to be attributed for introducing a new frame of structural functional understanding in sociological and social anthropological research in India. According to him, various groups and categories which are part of a society are related to each other. He understands the social reality of society through these perspectives.

Keywords

Functionality, Social reality, Field work, Political Power

Discussion

3.1.1 Structural Functionalist Approach

The structural-functionalist emphasis on the parts of harmony, a system's functional unity, is described in terms of social order. They defined society by saying that everything within the system must necessarily serve the needs of the whole. Structural-functionalism is brought into sociology by borrowing concepts from the biological sciences. Structure in biology refers to organisms, meaning a relatively stable arrangement of relationships between different cells and the consequences of the activity of the various organs in the life process of the organism as their function. Spencer's "organic analogy" compared society with organisms. He believed that society went through stages similar to infancy, childhood, adulthood and old age like an organism. But his more influential observation in the context of functionalism was looking at society as made up of parts with functions. This early perspective was developed by Durkhiem and Radcliffe-Brown. Durkheim's approach was structural functionalism, which was furthered by Radcliffe-Brown. While both of them did not deny the importance of evolution, they were more interested in the societies of their time than in the past. The structural functionalist approach studies society as interconnected individuals who form a structure. These structures have their definite functions which maintain the society as a whole. The individual is insignificant and can be replaced. According to him, what is more important than individuals is the structures and their functions.

Biocultural functionalists like Malinoswki were interested in the biological needs of the individual and thought of the cultural functions as the way to maintain these needs. Malinowski focused on the individual, he looked at how the language, values and other elements of culture interacted with each other to provide for the needs of individuals. His functionalist approach believed that the culture is best understood through the functions and interrelations of the constituents of these cultures like language, values and beliefs, norms, artefacts, laws,etc.

Radcliffe-Brown on the other hand was more interested in the social structure than the biological needs. His approach called structural functionalism believed in a social structure that was constituted by units that function to ensure the continuity of the whole. These social structures are arrangements of individuals like the class, caste, family, etc.

According to structural functionalists, society is a system, whose parts are working together for the solidarity and stability of the system. We can understand this with reference to parts of our biological systems. Similar to the digestive system consisting of stomach, mouth, intestines and so on, our society also consists of various individuals. These individuals have certain roles as part of the system. For structural functionalists, the function of the individual in the system for maintaining the whole is more important than the individual itself. The essential functions performed by an institution forms the basis of studying them.

A functionalist's attempt is to study the various institutions like caste, family, kinship,

etc. in relation to the whole and with each other. The interrelated and interdependent nature of all aspects of the culture is the significant part in their study of society. The structural functionalists pushed for a shift in methods and approaches in British anthropology to include fieldwork as a constitutive element of social anthropology. The researcher was expected to spend time living among the society studied, sharing their life-style and making descriptive observations.

Radcliffe-Brown believes that one can study social structures like class, religion, family, and so on, not through the nature of individuals, but through the functions performed to maintain the structure. A social structure to him, was an arrangement of individuals. In the case of family, the family as a structure has certain functions in the society. The members of the family like the father, wife and sons also have certain roles they must fulfil. The activities taken up by these members to fulfil their roles make the life of the society. All these activities are at the same time meant to maintain the societal order. The individual is insignificant, and their role as wife or daughter or mother, is more important. His influence was predominant among South African and Australian anthropologists. Through his student M.N. Srinivas, his structural functionalism reached India.

In India, the structural-functionalist approach to studying society was followed by many scholars like M. N. Srinivas, S. C. Dube, McKim Marriott and so on. They believed the various social institutions like the caste to be functioning to maintain the social structure of Indian society. A social institution like that of caste, is understood through empirical study of these institutions and its significance in regulating the interpersonal relations in the society. This pushed for more fieldwork based sociology in India that till then based their works in the

Indological texts. The structural functionalist approach studied the functional expression of caste in the society through extensive fieldwork, rather than looking for textual and Indological sources to legitimate the origin and structure.

3.1.2 M. N. Srinivas

Fig 3.1.1 M.N. Srinivas

Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas (1916-1999) was a pioneer in Indian sociology and social anthropology. Finishing his Master of Arts (M.A) under G. S. Ghurye in Bombay, he moved to Oxford for PhD, supervised by Radcliffe-Brown and Evans Pritchard. In 1951, Srinivas returned to India and joined the University of Baroda to head their new Department of Sociology. He also founded the Department of Sociology in Delhi University. Srinivas patterned both these departments to integrate both Social Anthropology and Sociology.

As a strong advocate of field-based research in Indian sociology, he was able to reframe and develop new concepts, especially with respect to the persistence and transformation of caste in India. Born in a Brahmin family and brought up in Mysore, his field of research focused on religion and caste especially in the regions of *Mysore* and *Coorg*. Caste in India, especially in South India, had dominated his research and shaped his finding and observation on the caste system. He developed a strong fieldwork tradition in India through his PhD students.

M. N. Srinivas is an influential figure in the post-independence shaping of sociology in India. After his return from Oxford, Srinivas wrote prolifically on social changes in India and published on various aspects of Indian culture like caste, religion, village societies and politics. Through his works he identified new perspectives in understanding caste and its significance in the political future of independent India. The works of Srinivas, contributed not only to Sociology, but to the common vocabulary, through the key terms he coined like 'Dominant caste', 'Sanskritisation', 'Westernisation' and 'Vote bank'. Though his major contribution to sociology was the development of fieldwork as an influential organ of sociological study, it was most often limited to locally bound sites. Out of his contributions to sociological lexicon, we will focus on 'Sanskritisation and 'Dominant Caste' in this unit..

3.1.3 Sanskritisation

The concept of 'Sanskritisation' was introduced into Sociology of India by M. N. Srinivas in his doctoral dissertation on the religion of Coorgs. The dissertation submitted to Oxford was published in 1952 as *'Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India'*. The term was adopted by scholars and many have written on this concept. Despite disagreements, misunderstanding and misinterpretations, that term is frequently used in social science as well as humanities.

Though used by many scholars in its linguistic significance, Srinivas coined this term as more or less a religious concept that was based on Sanskritic Hinduism-the traditions, rituals and deities of the vedas, puranas and other Sanskrit religious texts. In the comparison of the ritual differences with respect to various items of culture like shaving, bath, lamp, mourning and so on, he attempted to bring out the distinction of the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic Hinduism of Coorg. Based on these observations, he introduced the concept of Sanskritisation,

that is the adoption of deities, ideologies and rituals of Sanskritic hinduism by non-sanskritic hinduism. The initial idea of Sanskritisation was further developed and presented in his later works with more clarity.

Srinivas believes that the structural basis of hindu society is caste and we can understand the structural framework of Sanskritisation only once we understand caste. He notes that the castes in the higher positions of caste hierarchy are more sanskritised and the lower caste and outlying tribes tend to adopt these practices to improve their status. The theoretical ban on adopting brahminical rites has been barely effective in preventing the lower castes from adopting the customs and rites.

The twice-borns or the members of the three varnas Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas are believed to be born physically once and spiritually again through an initiation ceremony. Their rituals and lifestyle is according to the Vedas, Manusmriti and similar Sanskrit texts. They attained higher positions in the caste system. The lower caste on the other hand had different deities, sacrificial practices, eating habits and so on. In order to improve their position in the caste hierarchy, these castes would adopt vedic habits like vegetarianism, or worship Vedic Gods like Indra, Rudra, Agni, Vayu, etc. According to M.N. Srinivas 'Sanskritisation' is the process by which a 'low' Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, 'twice-born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste by the local community.

The motivation for adopting the rituals and customs according to Srinivas, is the tendency in Indian castes to pass off for a higher caste. Brahmins being the highest in

hierarchy was the most influential, but in the longer run, the customs of the dominant castes in a region became more influential. 'If the locally dominant caste is Brahmin or Lingayat it will tend to transmit a Brahminical model of Sanskritisation, whereas if it is Rajput or Bania it will transmit Kshatriya or Vaishya models. Of course, each locally dominant caste has its own conception of Brahmin, Kshatriya, or Vaishya models'.

As Srinivas observed, Sanskritization mostly allows the caste to move up the hierarchy, though in exceptional cases like the Smiths, it brings upon them various disabilities. The Smiths wear the sacred thread and call themselves Vishwakarma Brahmins, and yet they were prohibited from taking their wedding procession through the village of right-handed castes. Right-handed castes are those who depend on land and agriculture while the left-handed castes are involved in commerce or are artisans. This could be due to the claim on a position that is relatively much higher than their original position in the hierarchy.

Srinivas also stresses on the point that Sanskritization does not automatically provide an upward mobility, but one must present the necessary claim to be accepted as the varna, be it brahmins, kshatriyas or vaishyas. This may be through altering of their customs and sometimes with myths to justify their claims. Sanskritisation is observed to be a process of more than two generations and the upward movement in the hierarchy of caste is achieved only if the caste maintains the pressure regarding the claims during this period of gaining acceptance.

Apart from ritual and customs, new ideas and values also found their way to the lower castes, like karma, dharma, papa, moksha and so on, which are frequently used in Sanskrit literature. The British rule also helped spread the Sanskrit theological ideas, wherein the technological development aided communication and accessibility to the sanskritic ideas through translations, even for lower castes.

The oppositional nature of various Kshatriya and Brahmin values, have always posed a confusion. With the arrival of the British, they replaced Kshatriyas. 'The Brahmins looked up to the British, and the rest of the people looked up to both the Brahmins and British'. Srinivas notes that while the ritually permeated life of the Brahmin was getting more and more westernised, the rest were getting more and more sanskritised.

Another notable observation made by Srinivas is the lack of upward movement even after the Sanskritisation of untouchables. Groups outside the hindu flood have successfully integrated to the hindu system, while the untouchables still remain untouchable. Sanskritisation is a heterogeneous concept and is extremely complex. Thus one must understand that it is a widespread cultural and social process and studying Sanskritisation subsumes merely understanding the nature of these processes.

Srinivas choses the word 'Sanskritisation' over the word 'brahminisation' for the reason that the process, to him, was not always through brahmanic agents. In some cases, the lower caste would adopt the practices of castes that exercised more social and political control over the area. The Ezhavas may adopt the habits of Nairs than directly shifting to Brahminical rituals. He also stresses that all aspects of Sanskritisation were not vedic and hence the term 'Brahminisation' may be mistaken for adoption of only vedic traditions. It only formed a form of Sanskritisation. According to him, 'Brahminisation is subsumed in the wider process of Sanskritization though at some points Brahminisation and Sanskritisation are at variance with each other'.

To understand the complexity and its difference from Brahminisation, we must understand the dominant caste of a region. A village with a non-brahmanical caste like vaishyas or Kshatriyas dominating, the Sanskritization is a slow process where the values adopted are not brahminical. Thus knowing and identifying the dominant caste of a region is crucial in understanding the heterogeneity of the Sanskritisation process. The next section of this unit will deal with the concept of dominant caste as developed and explained by M. N. Srinivas.

3.1.4 Dominant Caste

According to M N Srinivas the term 'dominant caste' refers to the caste in the village which is numerically strong and also wields the greatest economic and political power. The numerical strength and economic and political power of a caste group will decide the power of the caste group in the particular region and their position in the caste hierarchy. Dominant caste as a sociological term was developed by M.N. Srinivas to address the emergence of a certain caste in any region as having a greater economic and political position. What we must keep in mind is that the dominant caste according to M.N. Srinivas does not define a spiritual hierarchy that has been legitimised through the ancient text, but a more ground reality where one caste exerted more economic and political control in a society.

MN Srinivas developed the concept of dominant caste in the context of his study of Rampura village in Mysore. The emergence of the "Vokkaligas" as a prominent caste that exerted considerable political and social power in the Rampura village is studied by Srinivas. Despite ranking below the Brahmins and the Lingayats in the caste hierarchy, the "Vokkaligas" rose to social and political power in the village. This convinced Srinivas of the significance of the concept of dominant caste in understanding social life. Though his findings were based on the field work done in the village of Rampura, close to the Mysore city, he extends the findings to other villages like the Reddy and Kamma dominance in Andhra Pradesh, Rajputs in Northern India and Nairs in Kerala. Through this concept he tried to understand the social, economic and political life of the rural communities and their day to day life. The dominant caste enjoyed dominance in factors of settling disputes in the village, in influencing the social life of the other caste and controlling the economy of the village.

The concept of dominant caste has been used for the first time in sociological literature by M. N. Srinivas in his essay '*Social System of a Mysore Village*', which was written after his study of village Rampura. The term dominant caste is used to refer to a caste which "wields economic or political power and occupies a fairly high position in the hierarchy."

There are three important characteristics which decide the nature and characteristics of a dominant caste in a rural setup. They are:

a. **Numerical strength:** The numerical strength of the particular caste in the given region is very important. To exert dominance a caste should occupy a considerable portion of the total population. A caste forming the majority of the population of the region would be able to exert their control over the few rich higher caste members who occupy a much lesser percentage of the population in the given region. If the highest caste in the caste hierarchy is numerically strong enough, they will become the dominant caste in the area. The numerically majority alone is not enough to exert dominance, but remains an important factor. The Namboothiri brahmins

are not as numerically strong as Dalits in Kerala, yet they exert more dominance owing to other factors. Whereas, the numerically strong Nairs, have more dominance in the society due to their larger number than the Namboothiri brahmins.

b. **Economic power :** The land ownership of the caste is also a decisive element in their dominance. In the village, a caste that owns the most percentage of the land will have a great control of the society within the village. The village life was mostly land centric and life of all caste groups directly or indirectly depended on the land owners, as they are people who provide employment and food. The landowners hire others as labourers and provide food, rent and other benefits instead or along with wages. Thus the economical life of the village can be understood to be regulated by these landowning castes. Srinivas uses the example of Jats of Rajasthan, who employ Brahmins as their workers.

c. **Political power:** they hold positions of political power and have established strong relations with other political leaders and elected representatives. In the village, the panchayat and other local governing bodies are often controlled by these castes. For example, in Kerala, the government officials, positions of political powers, elected representatives, etc were dominated by Nairs who can also be identified as the dominant caste in the region as they also form a part of the population, exerting considerable economic power.

In his later work '*The Dominant Caste of Rampura*' he revises the characteristics of the dominant caste or elements of dominance to include relatively high ritual position in the caste system and improved occupational and educational status through western education. The lower castes like the shudras and untouchables rarely rise to be a dominant caste. In the case of the Vokkaligas of Rampura, the absence of a genuine Kshatriya or Vaishya caste group allowed this rise to dominance, according to Srinivas. The Western education brought by the British, provided access for a lot of non- brahmin castes to education, opening way to government positions and through this upward mobility in caste hierarchy. All the elements of dominance may not be present in the dominant caste of the area, but the one with the most elements usually dominates. He also notes that in a village there can be more than one dominant caste, and in some cases, one dominant caste may give way to another, over time.

Considering these factors, a dominant caste cannot be equated with the spiritually superior caste. Whereas, it should be identified as one that exerts a certain dominance over the society in its political and economic decisions due to a combination of these elements of dominance.

As we know the power relation in a rural social system is measured on the basis of the numerical strength and socio-economic and political power. In such village setups, the dominant caste enjoyed high social status and positions. At the same time the lower caste people of the village considered them as a reference group and tried to imitate their behaviour, ritual pattern, custom and belief system. In that way, the dominant caste plays an important role in the process of Sanskritization or 'process of cultural transmission' in that locality.

Recap

- According to structural functionalists, society is a system, whose parts are working together for the solidarity and stability of the system.

- A functionalist's attempt is to study the various institutions like caste, family, kinship, etc. in relation to the whole and with each other.

- In India, the structural-functionalist approach to studying society was followed by many like M. N. Srinivas, S. C. Dube, McKim Marriott and so on.

- Srinivas believes that the structural basis of Hindu society is caste.

- According to Srinivas, the structural framework of Sanskritization can only be understood through caste.

- Srinivas notes that the castes in the higher positions of caste hierarchy are more sanskritised and the lower caste and outlying tribes tend to adopt these practices to improve their status.

- Sanskritisation referred to the adaptation of ritual and cultural habits of a more sanskritised caste by other castes in an attempt to pass off as a higher caste in the caste hierarchy.

- Srinivas defines dominant caste as the most numerically, economically and politically powerful caste in a region and may not always be the spiritually superior caste.

- The lower caste of the region may adapt the ritual and social practices of the dominant caste to establish themselves as higher in the hierarchy.

Objective Questions

1. Who introduced the concept 'Sanskritisation'?

2. Which year was the book *'Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India'* published?

3. Which are the twice-born castes in the varna system?

4. In which work does M. N Srinivas introduce the concept of Sanskritisation?

5. Which is the term that used to define the process of "low" Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changing its customs, ritual, ideology, and way

of life in the direction of a high, and frequently, "twice-born" caste.

6. What was the term used by M N Srinivas to address the caste that held the most numeric, political and economic power in a region?

7. M. N. Srinivas developed the concept of 'Dominant' caste, primarily based on which caste and village?

Answers

1. M.N. Srinivas

2. 1952

3. Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas

4. Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India

5. Sanskritisation

6. Dominant caste

7. Vokkaligas of Rampura Village

Assignments

1. Discuss the structural functionalist approach of M.N. Srinivas to understand the Indian Society.

2. Briefly discuss the concept 'Sanskritisation' put forward by M.N. Srinivas.

3. Describe the concept of Dominant Caste and its significance in the current society.

4. Explain the major characteristic features of dominant caste in rural settings.

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2

S.C. Dube: Social Change, Modernisation

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ introduce the academic approach of S.C.Dube in Indian sociology

♦ analyse the contributions of S.C.Dube to Indian sociology through structural functionalism

♦ identify the dimensions of social change and modernisation

Prerequisites

In your schooling days, social science textbooks might have explained about the pre independence India and its socio-religious scenario. You are aware about the rigid caste and other social evils that exist in our society. The changes happened socially and geographically in the structure of Indian society.

The Indian societal structural change could not be explained without addressing 'Indian Villages'. According to Mahatma Gandhi, " The future of India lies in its villages". The social structure of an Indian village is not the same as the Indian society as a whole. Each society has its own social, economic, political and cultural aspects which determine the structure and functions of the particular society. How do these social changes happen in Indian society? Dube highlighted the role of various social, economic, ritual and political social structures shaping the village structure. These structural changes bring modernisation and development in all the sectors of the society.

Keywords

Ethnic groups, Social constraints, Westernisation, Indian villages, Social transformation, Structural change

Discussion

3.2.1 S.C Dube

S. C. Dube's contributions to sociology have stemmed from his rigorous attention to change village, tribe and rural life of India. He wrote on tribal communities, rural life, change, modernisation, and development. The recurring themes in his works have been the inevitable change in the various rural structures. He did not think of Indian villages as a universal structure or a static one.

Fig 3.2.1 S.C. Dube

Shyama Charan Dube(1922-1996) is a well known Sociologist and Anthropologist born at Narsinghpur in Madhya Pradesh and passed away on 4th February 1996. Dube, educated in Political science at Nagpur University, started his career as a lecturer in Bishop College, Nagpur. He published his first work on Kamar, a tribe of shifting cultivators from Madhya Pradesh while he was working in the Department of Political Science, Lucknow University. He later joined Osmania University and left the position when he took over as the Deputy director of Anthropological Survey of India in Nagpur. He held teaching positions in Social anthropology and sociology, within and outside India.

Dube encouraged interdisciplinary orientation and applied the structural functionalist method to study the changing villages of India. He believed that no single village can be the representative of the whole rural India. He stressed on the changing nature of Indian villages opposing the erstwhile western assumption that villages are static. His work Indian Villages (1955) is a detailed descriptive work on the village settings and structure of the Shamirpet region in Telangana. This has contributed much to the village studies in Indian sociology. Similar to Srinivas, extensive fieldwork and participant observation was a key element in the works of Dube.

In the following section we will discuss Dube's conception of social change and modernisation.

3.2.2 Social Change

S. C. Dube was part of the post-independence surge in village studies using field view, tracking the developments and change. Similar to Srinivas, Dube also studied the villages extensively focusing on the changes in social structures and systems. Most of his research was based in Shamirpet village of Hyderabad. In his work *Indian Villages* (1955, 2018) he devotes a chapter to the changing village including a comparison between the last fifty years of feudal rule in Shamirpet and self-governance during the post-independence period. He draws out the changes in the aspects of administration, education, occupation, communication and similar aspects to track the social change that was initiated by the rural development and welfare activities.

The book deals with the following aspects

1. The setting, which includes the description of the village, the people, housing pattern, the

neighbourhood, etc.

2. Social structure that incorporates-caste , inter- caste and inter- village relationships. Every caste practises endogamy and there is definite social practice between them.Typically, people on higher levels turn down food offered by those at lower levels. Each caste occupation is monopolised and approved by religion. Dube discovered that people from many castes are connected by shared morals and obligations.

3. Muslims and Hindus are two separate groups that retain their respective socio religious identities.

4. The village is internally organised into two distinct units, namely the socio religious organisation and the administrative organisation of the government and semi-government authorities. He observes women in terms of five activities - domestic work, agriculture, festivals and ceremonies, birth ,marriage and death, village administration and politics.

5. The primary caste groups in the village perform specific traditional economic roles and activities. Poultry is pursued by all sections of the village population except the Brahmins and Komatis.

6. Folklore, mythologies, saints and poets , religious teachings, encounters with people who are knowledgeable about the Bible

and other popular religious texts, animism, polytheism, and even monotheism are all included in the construction of rituals.

7. The interconnected web of kinship represents the structure of the family. The primary feature of rural India is the patrilineal and patrilocal nuclear or joint family unit.

8. The division of labour in terms of work and diet, standard of living and status differences within the community are all examined in relation to the people's level of living.

a. Society and Social Change

The decline of Muslim privilege after the end of the former regime (Nizams of Hyderabad), prohibition of forced labour and forced extraction by government officials (corruption and bribery), abolition of feudal estate (Jagirdari system similar to jajmani system discussed under Dumont), intense welfare and nation building activities (education, health, agriculture, animal rearing, etc.), political activities and general election are some social changes that Dube observes post independence. He examines the motivation and mechanism of these above mentioned processes of change.

The state compulsion through legal actions like the abolition of untouchability and other post-independence measures was able to bring about little change in the villages. More influence was affected by factors of utility, convenience and availability. The usage of buses, trains and new occupational tools are an expression of this. Other changes like mill-made dress, cigarettes and tea had additional factors of prestige attached to it. He identifies the agents of these changes to

be government officials and village people who have returned from urban areas. Though there are tendencies of rejection of urban culture, Dube observes that "their selection or rejection naturally depends upon their need, utility, prestige-value and conformity with or opposition to the prevailing set of values in the community."

These observations were made soon after independence and Dube often reiterates in the text that the full consequences of these changes have not yet expressed themselves. In his work *India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development* is a more analytical observation on the changes in village society. In this work Dube analyses the rural development plans in action, responses to change, influence of state agents, communication and the cultural factors in community development. The fieldwork is done in the villages of Uttar Pradesh.

The focus as mentioned is on the rural development plan, especially the Community Development Program that was initiated by the newly independent government for the progress of the nation through development and change of its villages. He analyses the formation of the planning committee, the implementation and success of these development programs. The planning committee through the field agents communicated the various development programs to the villagers. The reception and reaction to these developments and its consequent results are summed up by Dube.

Some of these programs were able to bear success in reaching its intended results, like the improvements in agricultural methods, but some others like adult education and community orchards did not receive the expected response. Programs like community labour projects on the other hand, produced opposite results. These programs intended to develop a community morale among villagers, made the labouring group feel that they were facing the same exploitation as before, but in a new form. This was due to the lack of participation of the upper caste and class in not more than verbal support and supervision.

According to Dube, multiple factors contributed to these mixed reactions. The community development program was introduced to the villages with its own values and morales and these new developments were accommodated, but with reservations. Especially the divisional nature of the villages into caste among Hindus or caste-like groups among Muslims, had its influence in the extent of success of these development programs.

As for the role of government agents, the communication between the state officials within the project and also between the project and people had its own limitations. The development programs designed by the planning committee were modified by the field agents to suit the needs of the particular village. What must have developed into adaptations of the larger plan to suit the needs of the villages, simply got reduced to a series of orders with quotas and deadlines to be met. This failed to make the villagers understand the intent and motivate their willing participation. The cultural factor is another major instrument in governing the success of these development programs. In most parts of India, the lower caste believed that reading and writing is not meant for them and it would cause the gods to be angry with them. This stood in the way of their willing participation in educational programs. The social practices, values, world-view and simple habits were all determinants of how the various programs are accepted by the people.

In his works Dube observes that in the

movement towards change, the agents and cultural factors play an important role. While the legal abolition of untouchability has reduced the heinous nature of this practice, untouchability is not completely removed from the social practices of most villages. The movement of urban values through the state agents and the urban folks are the motivation that set the wheels of change in motions. But these changes are governed by the existing cultural norms and ruling values of the village. The development programs that contributed to these social changes was part of the post independent project of modernising India through modernisation of rural communities. In the following section, we will look at how Dube viewed these modernisation processes.

3.2.3 Modernisation

Modernisation is a very intricate phenomenon that entails several interconnected changes of many different kinds. Both Srinivas and Dube, were highly influenced by the process of social changes that the Indian villages were undergoing. Part of this discussion is inevitably the aspect of modernisation. The discussions of modernisation was a concern for the contemporaries of Dube and he too invested a lot of attention to modernisation. In continuation with the discussions of social change, Dube identifies that a lot of these development programs on a larger scale had the influence of the nation-building process that aimed at economic growth and imitation of the west. He is critical of this imitation and its equation with modernisation.

Dube's collection, *Contemporary India and Its Modernization* (1974) brings together various essays, addresses, and transcripts of popular broadcasts of Dube on the debates of modernization in India. In this work, Dube formulates that the framework for the modernisation of India should meet the following criterias,

1. Interdependence between regional and ethnic groups that are consciously planned.

2. Social restraint and social discipline.

3. The policy making and policy implementation with expertise.

4. Reward excellent performance and consequently keep inefficiency and corruption in check through a reward system.

The post-world war tendency to project westernisation into third world societies was not received well. Thus, they brought these westernisation processes under the framework of modernisation. What was happening in the name of modernisation was westernisation. This westernisation meant mere imitation of the west without modifying the values to suit the Indian social structure. His suggestions were for modernisation and development programs that improved quality of life rather than growing the gross national product or mere imitation. His discussions about bureaucracy, leadership, education, planning and secularism are suggestions for their reconstruction to enable a modernisation that improves the life of people to a better quality instead of mere economic centred growth. In the later work, *Modernisation and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms*(1988), Dube calls for modernisation that considers the culture, environment protection and inclusion of the non-elites especially in decisions pertaining to them. He believed that the plan for modernisation should be one that understands the existing culture to plan out a better way to improve living standards for everyone. This would prevent the rejection of the many development plans as had happened with the Community Development Programs. His suggestion for modernisation also considered

the environmental factors. The new plans of development through infrastructure or other measures should not be one that harms the environment of the area. Instead, these modernisation plans should be planned out in order to protect and preserve them. Next consideration for Dube was the inclusion of non-elites. He believed that the lower caste and the lower class should be allowed a space for opinion and participation, especially in decisions taken regarding their socio-economic progress.

According to him the three principles that must guide the development programs to achieve modernisation are conscientization, affirmative action, and institution building. The conscientization implies a critical understanding of the social realities and especially an identification of the root causes of oppression. Affirmative actions were policies taken by the government or the committees to ensure representation from various groups, these include political reservations, educational reservations and so on . Institution building involves the formation of new institutional frameworks that will facilitate the development programs and ensure its reach. The government should form new institutions like child and women welfare departments, handicapped persons welfare corporations, minority welfare departments and so on.

These principles will guide a development paradigm that makes modernisation possible without the challenges of unbalanced changes and rigid social norms that are causing development to benefitting only a section of the society. This suggestion for an alternative paradigm was motivated by his wish for a development that provided socio-economic growth for all rather than the economic growth of the nation as a whole.

According to Dube, the development is in four phases,

1. The first phase is centred on economic progress. The developmental programs are focused on bringing about economic growth. Economic development is equated with development.

2. The second phase is the recognition of the relation between social change and economic growth. The need for institutional values and social values that allow economic progress for all sections is identified.

3. The third phase identifies and reacts to the shortcomings of the existing developmental paradigms and modernization. This phase is reactive and responsive.

4. The fourth phase is the reflexive phase where the world order and national order is understood. The power and system that controls the world and national events undergoes reflection in this phase.

He believed in erecting institutional frameworks that would safeguard the cultural diversity and the environment, while ensuring economic growth. These frameworks would distribute its benefits to all sections of the society, bringing them together to an equal growth. The unidirectional approach to the development centred solely on economic growth had to be discarded and a new paradigm that makes his wish for socio-economic growth possible should be adopted according to him.

Recap

- Dube encouraged interdisciplinary orientation and applied the structural functionalist method to study the changing villages of India.

- S. C. Dube critiqued the western understanding of Indian villages as static.

- Dube believed that no village can be a representative of the whole India.

- Dube studied the villages extensively focusing on the changes in social structures and systems.

- The village is internally organised into two distinct units, namely the socio- religious organisation and the administrative organisation of the government and semi government authorities.

- Dube observes women in terms of five activities - domestic work, agriculture, festivals and ceremonies, birth marriage and death, village administration and politics.

- According to Dube the interconnected web of kinship represents the structure of the family.

- The primary feature of rural India is the patrilineal and patrilocal nuclear or joint family unit.

- Dube observes that in the movement towards change, the agents and cultural factors play an important role.

- Dube calls for modernisation that considers the culture, environment protection and inclusion of the non-elites especially in decisions pertaining to them rather.

- Dube suggested discarding the unidirectional approach to the development centred solely on economic growth .

Objective Questions

1. In which village was S. C. Dube's work Indian Villages centered?

2. Where did Dube conduct his fieldwork on community development programs in India?

3. Which of Dube' works provides a detailed analysis of social change in a village society?

4. What is the year of publication for the book *'India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development*?

5. According to Dube, who were considered the agents of social change?

6. Which book contains Dube's collection of discussions and debates on modernisation in India?

7. In which year, *"Modernisation and Development: The Search for Alternative Paradigms"* published?

8. What kind of progress is witnessed in the first phase of development?

9. Which stage of development are characteristics of reactive and responsive to the problems of existing development paradigms?

10. Which is the fourth phase of development?

Answers

1. Shamirpet of Hyderabad

2. Uttar Pradesh

3. *.India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development*

4. 1958

5. Government officials or state agents, town-returned villagers

6. *Contemporary India and Its Modernization (1974)*

7. 1988

8. Economic progress

9. The third phase of development

10. Reflexive

Assignments

1. Briefly describe S. C Dube's perspectives on 'Indian Villages'.

2. Discuss the major social changes in administration, education and occupational sectors of Indian society as per S C Dube's perspectives.

3. Narrate the social changes taken place in the socio- religious aspects of post Independent India.

4. Illustrate the strategies put forward by Dube in improving economic growth of Indian society.

5. Discuss about S.C. Dube's perspectives on the concept Modernisation, and its reflections in contemporary India.

6. Explain the difference between Westernisation and Modernisation.

7. Discuss about the four phases of development according to S C Dube.

Suggested Readings

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4

BLOCK

Marxism

D. P Mukerji: Personality, Dialectical Approach in Studying Indian Society

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ understand the Marxian perspective and its approach towards Indian society

♦ explore the perspectives of D P Mukerji to analyse Indian Sociology

♦ examine the life sketch and major contributions of D P Mukerji to Indian Sociology

Prerequisites

Imagine the social structure of Indian society. You might be familiar with the evolution of India's social framework from ancient to modern times. Has the societal situation remained consistent through these eras? Social changes are evident across various aspects of Indian societal progress such as fundamental needs, beliefs, viewpoints, disputes and more. These changes have manifested over time. This continuous transformation is essentially a dialectical process rooted in the notion that the very essence of reality is change. All aspects of society undergo change, and this change can potentially spark to conflicts, leading to the emergence of new societal changes or alterations to existing ones.

A foundational understanding of the dialectical approach as developed by D.P. Mukerji is essential for further discussions. D.P. Mukerji applied the dialectical method to analyse Indian society. This approach involves recognizing the interconnectedness of opposing concepts such as tradition and modernity, colonialism and nationalism, as well as individualism and collectivism in the context of contemporary India. Additionally, understanding Mukerji's attention to historical context, how values blend and cultures mix due to the interaction of tradition and modernity, and the shift from usual 'class struggle' stories to more complex social and cultural changes will help to understand his contributions to our understandings of Indian society.

Keywords

Historical materialism, Tradition, Modernity, Colonialism, Economic determinism, Liberal humanism.

Discussion

In the previous blocks we discussed two important approaches to understand Indian society. Both these approaches focused on the colonial framework and emphasised on the Western models of analysis. This naive acceptance of Western theoretical models and research techniques without a contextual understanding of its significance or appropriateness to Indian circumstances will facilitate misrepresentation of perspective and lead to the stagnation of the discipline in India. Existing frameworks use historic, Indological, civilisational and structural-functional models to understand Indian society which produces assumptions based on an equilibrium and stability.

The 17th and 18th century industrialisation and subsequent developments in Europe led to the emergence of a new social class. Karl Marx tried to understand these developments from a dialectical materialist perspective. According to Marx, the modes of production in the historical development of societies varied in terms of different stages, such as the primitive, ancient, feudal, capitalist and, finally communist. In every stage, society is divided into social classes on the basis of ownership of production; for example, haves and have-nots. The constant exploitation of non-owners' class will lead to class struggle and change in the social structure. In the early 20th century different scholars used this framework to understand Indian social reality.

A.R. Desai identified a number of issues related with the existing approaches to study Indian society. According to Desai the theoretical models and conceptual frames lack Indianness and social concern. Another important issue related to the existing frameworks is that it put over-emphasis on positivism or super-scientism while analysing the society which led to the dehumanising nature of the discipline. These approaches were not trying to establish credibility with common people and not address policy concerns. These frameworks are focused on the small-scale unit of the society such as village communities, caste groups or tribal clusters and take those segments from their larger context. There are other issues, such as contemporary relevance of the topic, lack of critical questions, absences of action strategies, and value free attitude.

In this context, Indian Sociology demands a new paradigm to address above mentioned issues and backdrops. Indian society witnessed huge transformations after independence and to understand this social change we need to develop new approaches. As a result of this, different social scientists, such as M.N. Dutta, D. D. Kosambi, P.C Joshi, R.S Sharma, Irfan Habib, Ramakrishna Mukherjee, D. P. Mukherji, A. R. Desai and others looked at Marxist postulates and concepts to understand Indian society.

Among Indian sociologists, R.K Mukerjee, D. P. Mukerji, and A. R. Desai were three pioneers who advocated a dialectical-historical approach to study Indian society. They worked hard for the development of an indigenous social science approach, to understand the new India during and after the colonial rule. Their academic endeavours were active at the end of British colonial administration and at the peak of

the anti-colonial movement. They had witnessed the independence of the country and subsequent process of nation building.

4.1.1 Marxian Perspective in Indian Sociology

The Marxian perspective emphasised the historical and materialistic understanding of society. As we discussed, the existing frameworks to understand and analyse Indian society and social phenomena ignored the issues of class exploitations and Problems of working-class people. We can see an indifferent attitude by sociologists towards Marxist perspective in the formative period of the development of Sociology and Social Anthropology. But in the later phase we witnessed different scholars taking initiatives to understand and analyse Indian society and its history through Marxian methodological and ideological frameworks.

Now we have to look at the important propositions and basic assumptions in which the Marxian perspective is built up on. Firstly, it focused on the economic or materialist interpretation of Indian society. Second important proposition of the Marxian approach is that it paid attention to the dialectical aspect of the social relation. Dialectical approach helps to study and analyse the process of social change.

In January 1981, in his presidential address at 15th All India Sociological Conference, Meerut, A.R. Desai pointed that "marxist approach to understand Post independent Indian society will focus on the specific type of property relations which existed on the eve of independence and which are being elaborated by the state. As an active agent of transformation both in terms of elaborating legal normative notions as well as the working of actual policies, marxist approach pursued for development and transformation of Indian society into a developed one. The Marxist approach adopted the criteria of taking property relations to define the nature of society, helped the Indian scholars to designate the type of society, the class character of the state and the specificity of the path of development with all the implications.

4.1.2 D.P Mukerji

As we discussed in the beginning, in pre-independent India, Bombay and Lucknow were the two major centres for teaching Sociology. Along with Radha Kamal Mukerjee and D.N. Majumdar, Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji made Lucknow an important centre of Sociology-teaching and learning in India. He was one of the founding fathers of Indian Sociology. As we know, during the 19th and early 20th century Lucknow was an important centre of cultural and political renaissance in India.

D.P Mukherji was born in a middle class Bengali brahmin family. He belonged to a well-educated family and he completed his undergraduation in science and Postgraduation in History and Economics from Calcutta University. In 1924 he started his career as a teacher and was appointed in the Department of Economics and Sociology at Lucknow University at the age of 28. In 1949 he became a professor at Lucknow University. In 1953, he shifted to Aligarh Muslim University as a professor of Economics. In 1955 he became the president of Indian Sociological Society, a newly formed professional organisation of Indian sociologists.

Fig 4.1.1 D.P Mukerji

He used the dialectical materialist perspective of Marx to study Indian society.

Because of this Marxist orientation he is often called a Marxiologist or a social scientist of Marxism. Other than Sociology, D. P. Mukerji had versatile interests in Economics, literature, music, arts and History. He tried to develop a transdisciplinary approach in Sociology and opposed continuation of strict barriers between different social science disciplines. He was the first President of the Indian Sociological Conference and he was the Vice-President of the International Sociological Association (ISA). He served as the Director of Information under the first Congress-led government of the United Provinces of British India (1938-41) and U.P. Labour Inquiry Committee till 1947. He proved his administrative capacities and tried to bring about some important changes in policy-making and planning process.

Two important developments inspired D. P. Mukerji to widen his intellectual curiosity. First, as he was born and brought up in Bengal, his roots lay largely in the Bengal renaissance and cultural and political awakenings. During the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century Bengal was a leading centre of the intellectual awakening and political revival. Second, the anti-colonial struggles and movements for self-reliance in early 20th century India helped D. P. Mukerji to mould his intellectual pursuits. These two leading historical and cultural contexts facilitated his roots in the traditions and values of great Indian culture and stimulated him to think and write about Indian society and culture.

4.1.2.1 Works

1. Basic Concepts in Sociology (1932)

2. Personality and the Social Science (1924)

3. Modern Indian Culture (1948)

4. Problems of Indian Youths (1942)

5. Diversities (1958)

Through his books he tried to understand social changes happening in Indian society. Using the dialectical-historical method to analyse social change in Indian society, he identified the emergence of a new middle class as a result of British colonialism and subsequent developments.

Through these works D. P. Mukerji tried to develop a synthesis of three dominant paradigms, such as Brahmanical tradition of intellectual inquiry, Western liberal humanism, and dialectical materialism. He also tried to incorporate different disciplinary perspectives, such as Economics, Sociology and Politics to understand Indian social realities. Through this research and writings D. P. Mukerji tried to discover the sources and potentialities of social reality in the dialectic of tradition and modernity and he developed an integrated personality through the pursuit of knowledge.

4.1.3 Personality and the Social Science

In the initial phase of his works D. P. Mukerji focused on the conceptual issues in social science and Sociology in particular. DP's *Personality and the Social Sciences* (1924) were a self-reflexive account or 'a personal document'. Through this work he wants to clarify his own attitude towards the production of systematic knowledge about society and life. In this book he developed his ideas about the concept of personality. As we know, Sociology as a discipline stated analysing different issues concerning the relationship between individuals and the society. The existing literature on personality focuses on the abstract individual as a unit of the study. But he emphasised the 'holistic' and Psycho-sociological approach to understand personality.

So, personality is the product of the combination of the psychological process of the development of individuality and the social process of socialisation. In another word 'synthesis of the double process of individuality and the socialisation of the uniqueness of individual life, and this perfect unity' is called personality.

In *Personality and the Social Sciences* D.P. Mukerji questioned the existing notions about the modern individual and he developed an alternative image of man which is different from the idea of the individual. The modern conceptions about men emphasised an abstract and isolated individual. So he is a product of a social system in which he or she is segregated from social and collective life. This situation creates a de-humanized individual without acquiring personality by constant interaction and engagement with society and other people.

He conceptualised two kinds of men, one is Individual or *vyakti*; a Westernised modern secular man as an isolated being is not developed into a socialised being. Secondly, a person or purusha, is a more socialised and connected being. He or she is a product of both individualisation and socialisation. The second one, the purusha or person is an important conceptual category developed by D.P. Mukherji. According to him, Purusha is not isolated from society and individuals. This combination of individual and society helps a person to develop his/her personality. Thus, personality is a product of these interactions between individual and human groups.

According to D.P, though Indian social life is regimented into different social and caste groups, there is a strong bond between the people of the country. This togetherness helps the individual to develop his personality and feel comfortable in his/her social life. On the other hand, Western society is dominated by the market system where men are exposed to the manipulation of the market. It makes the individual depend upon the external forces and curtails the freedom to choose and possess consumer sovereignty. Indian tradition cultivates a low level of aspiration in individual life and it focuses on the group aspiration and personality development of the individual.

D. P's sociological analysis focused on a holistic, psycho-sociological individual instead of an abstract individual. For him, looking at an abstract individual will be a narrow focus of social science theorization. For this reason, personality gets an essential theoretical importance in the Sociology of D. P. He rejected the Western individualistic culture and argued that Indian culture and society are more oriented towards social and group norms and values.

4.1.4 Dialectical Approach

D. P was a well-known Marxist sociologist in the formative period of the development of the discipline. In the second phase of his intellectual endeavours, he focused on the Marxist approach to understand the dialectics of modernity and tradition, colonialism and nationalism, etc. He considered himself a 'Marxiologist' and he was quite interested in the Marxian methodology and kept a distance from the Marxian ideology or dogmas. He used Marxist methodological perspective to understand Indian social reality. He emphasised the importance of economic factors in shaping culture and traditions in Indian society. According to him, Indian sociologists lack interest in history and Philosophy and in the dynamism and meaningfulness of social life.

In '*Indian History: A Study in Method*' D. P emphasised the relevance of Marxist perspective in the understanding of Indian society and its history. As a social philosopher and a cultural critic, he focused on developing

social theory analysis without relying on empirical data. He used this perspective to understand the dialectical relationship between Indian tradition and modernity and Indian culture.

4.1.4.1 Tradition and Modernity

The debate over tradition Vs modernity is well-presented in the works of D. P Mukerji. In the initial phases of the development of the discipline Indian sociologists and social anthropologists focused on the process of modernisations of Indian traditions. They emphasised the social, political, and economic changes that happened in India as a result of colonial invasion. Thus, to understand social change in India we have to examine different aspects of traditions and the process of modernisations. Also, we have to analyse the scope and nature of the same. D. P Mukerji developed a critical analysis on modernisation process in India and he argued that our modernity is a hindrance to a real modernity.

In *Modern Indian Culture* and *Diversities*, D.P Mukerji tried to understand the nature and significance of Indian tradition and its engagement with modern Indian social reality. The word meaning of tradition is 'to transmit'; transmission of cultural elements from one generation to another. In Sanskrit there are two words, *parampara* (succession), *aitihya* (history)- equivalents to tradition. Both these words emphasise the rootedness of the traditions and exchange of it through constantly evoking and retelling of stories and folklore.

For D. P, tradition is not a static one but it is constantly changing according to different social and political changes. The rootedness in the past does not reject the possibility of change in the traditions. It indicates the possibility of constant changes

and adaptations to the historical situations and contexts. It also does not rule out the presence of internal or external sources of change in the society.

The most commonly cited internal source of change in Western societies is the economy, but this source has not been effective in India. Class conflict, D.P. believed, had been 'smoothed and covered by caste traditions' in the Indian context, where new class relations had not yet emerged very sharply. Based on this understanding, he concluded that one of the first tasks for a dynamic Indian sociology would be to provide an account of the internal, non-economic causes of change.

According to him, the first and primary important duty of an Indian sociologist is the study of Indian tradition. This study will help us to unearth the relationships between the economic or material relation and social change in Indian society. In his analysis on Indian traditions, D. P emphasised the importance of historical materialist interpretation of social change in India.

In *Modern Indian Culture: A Sociological Study* published in 1942, D. P considered Indian tradition as a result of social and historical process. Different socio-political-religious and economic factors contributed to the development of this tradition. Interactions between religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam played an important role in the shaping of a synergetic culture and traditions that India has. In the modern era, colonial administration, commerce and culture also altered the tradition of Indian society. So, these constant interactions and conflicts shaped Indian culture. This culture is neither Hindu nor Islamic nor Christian, neither purely Indian nor Western.

As we know, tradition is not a static one, it faces different challenges and changes according to the socio-political and economic contexts. The modernisation process is

a quest for a push to the higher stage of development. In his works D. P, tried to understand the nature and meaning of the Indian traditions and different ways to change them for the welfare of the common people. His dialectical materialist perspective focused on the dialectical relationship between Indian tradition and modernity. Indian tradition is a synthesis of different cultures. In different historical juncture, Indian culture intermingled with different cultures and value systems. This encounter created a synthetic culture resulting from cultural transformation and cultural assimilations between British colonialism and the Indian tradition.

He considered that India has a distinctive social and cultural characteristic. Thus, the prime duty of an Indian sociologist is to study these social and cultural traditions of the country. Tradition not only has historical significance but it has importance in the transition of the society as well. This sensitivity towards the changing nature of the tradition helps to critically understand the living nature of it in the past, present and future.

Recap

- Existing approaches to study Indian society lack Indianness and indigenous social concerns.

- As an alternative, M.N. Dutta, D. D. Kosambi, P.C Joshi, R.S Sharma, Irfan Habib, Ramakrishna Mukerjee, D. P. Mukherji, A. R. Desai and others looked at Marxist postulates and concepts to understand Indian society.

- Marxian perspective emphasised on the historical and materialistic understanding of society.

- Marxian perspective emphasised on the economic interpretation of the society.

- Marxist perspective highlighted the importance of dialectical approach to understand social change.

- D.P. Mukerji is often called as Marxiologist or a social scientist of Marxism.

- The Bengal renaissance and the subsequent cultural and political awakenings, the anti-colonial struggle and movements helped DP to mould his intellectual pursuits.

- In '*Personality and the Social science*', he questioned the existing notions about the modern individual and he developed an alternative image of 'man' which is different from the idea of the individual.

- He conceptualised two kinds of men, one is Individual or vyaktis, second is a person or purushas.

♦ Vyakti is Westernised modern secular man and isolated beings and he/she is not developed into a socialised being.

♦ Purushas are more socialised and connected beings and he or she is a product of both individualisation and socialisation.

♦ He used a dialectical approach to understand the relationship between Indian tradition and modernity.

♦ For D.P., tradition is not static; it is constantly changing according to different social and political changes.

♦ He believed that the first task for a dynamic Indian sociology would be to provide an account of the internal, non-economic causes of change.

Objective Questions

1. Who were the pioneers of the Marxian school of thought in India?

2. Which model focused on the social equilibrium and stability of society?

3. Which is the methodological tool of Marxian perspective to the understanding of society?

4. What are the five stages of historical development of societies proposed by Marx?

5. Which school of Indian sociology includes Radhakamal Mukerjee, D.N. Majumdar, and Dhurjati Prasad Mukerji ?

6. When did D.P Mukerji join the Department of Economics and Sociology at Lucknow University as a lecturer?

7. Which methodology was followed by D.P Mukherji to study Indian society?

8. Who was known as Marxiologist?

9. Who was the first President of the Indian Sociological Association?

10. Who is the author of '*Personality and the Social Science*'?

11. What is defined as the 'synthesis of the double process of individuality and the socialisation of the uniqueness of individual life, this perfect unity'?

12. Who is the author of '*Modern Indian culture: A Sociological Study*'?

13. Who is the author of ' *Diversities*'?

Answers

1. D. P. Mukherji and A. R. Desai

2. Structural Functional Model

3. Historical and Materialistic

4. The primitive, ancient, feudal, capitalist and, communist.

5. Lucknow School of Sociology

6. 1924

7. Dialectical Materialist Perspective

8. D. P Mukherji

9. D. P Mukherji

10. D. P Mukherji

11. Personality

12. D. P Mukherji

13. D. P Mukherji

Assignments

1. Examine the problems encountered in studying Indian society using the Western theoretical paradigm?

2. Who is D. P Mukerji? Evaluate his contributions to Indian Sociology.

3. Describe the D.P Mukerji's perspective on person; evaluate his work *'Personality' and Social scene'*

4. Describe the dialectical approach which D. P Mukerji proposed to the study of Indian society.

5. Differentiate between the concepts of *Vykthi* and *Purusha*

Suggested Reading

1. Beteille, A. (2002). *Sociology: Essays on Approach and Method.* New Delhi: OUP.

2. Das, V. (2003). *Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

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2

A.R. Desai: Social Background of Indian Nationalism, State and Society

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ examine the methodology adopted by A.R. Desai to explain Indian society

♦ describe the life sketch of A. R. Desai and his contributions to Indian Sociology

♦ compare and contrast various theoretical perspectives binding the study of Indian societies

Prerequisites

Like D. P. Mukherji, A. R. Desai too belonged to the Marxian school and took an eminent role in popularising dialectical approach in sociological studies in India. Desai criticised existing indological and structural-functional perspectives and the related micro villages studies. He appealed towards extending the frame from micro to macro studies such as emergence of capitalism, anti-colonial movement, peasant movements etc. Desai's works were a breakthrough in shifting Indian sociology from micro to meso studies.

His association with the Communist Party of India and later his interest in the nationalist movement under Indian National Congress influenced him to study the national movement using Marxian postulates. He employed Marxian methodologies and examined class relations of Indian society in the national movement. He extensively researched about the formation of the working class in India and their contributions for the nation building process. Desai analysed Indian social history using historical materialism and studied three century relations of feudalism, emergence of capitalism in India and working class movements. In this unit, we will discuss A. R. Desai's critical approach in studying Indian society and the national movement

Keywords

Ethnography, Meso studies, Historical materialism, Post-colonial India.

Discussion

4.2.1 A.R. Desai

Fig 4.2.1 A.R Desai

Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-94) was a prominent public intellectual and a Marxist Sociologist. Desai was born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiad in Central Gujarat. Traditionally, he belonged to the Nagar Brahmin; a caste most of whom are professionals and intellectuals. His father Ramanlal Vasantlal Desai was an important official in the princely state of Baroda in the 1920s and the 1930s. Ramanlal was a literary buff and considerate to the Gandhian nationalist movement. He played an important role in shaping Desai's political orientations and research interests. During his undergraduate studies in Baroda, he associated himself with radical student groups within the student movements.

Desai completed his graduation from Bombay University in Law and joined for PhD in the same university in 1946. In 1951 he joined the Department of Sociology as a faculty member and after 25 years of teaching and research he retired in 1975 as Head of the Department of Sociology from Bombay University. During this time and after his retirement Desai associated with different kinds of academic and political activities. He played a crucial role in the foundation of the Indian Sociological Society and acted as its President from 1978 to 1980.

He tried to redefine or reinterpret Marxian theories and perspectives according to the specific context of India. His academic career started during the 1950s when the influence of Bombay School of Sociology under the leadership of G.S Ghurye was declining. During the time, the discipline underwent structural changes such as the emergence and later dominance of indological and structural-functionalist perspectives in Indian Sociology. But Desai didn't embrace Ghurye's brand of Sociology and he started a new approach to analyse Indian society.

Different scholars focused on empirical studies and they produced ethnographic works on Indian village communities and agrarian structures. Through adopting Marxist perspective, Desai developed an alternative to the existing frameworks, such as the Indological and structural-functional perspective. When these perspectives focused on village studies, caste structures, tribal life and kinship patterns, Desai paid attention to the development of capitalism, emergence of nationalism, class formation, agrarian structure, the state formation, and peasant movements, etc. in the context of India. This shift from micro sociological studies to macro and meso studies marked an important turning point in the development of Sociology in India.

He tried to develop an interdisciplinary Sociology in which he alerted on the

historical, political and economic dimensions of different phenomena like the Marxian framework and he used historical analysis to understand the constitution of social structure and its various elements in Indian society. For example, when Desai analysed the feudal structure of India he traced the historical root of its development and social formation of a feudal social system in India. Likewise, in his study of the emergence of nationalism in India; he analysed the historical link for the development of Sociology. At the same time sociologists and social anthropologists of India focused on the field work and participant observations to understand the social structures and its development.

In 1938 Desai started his intellectual endeavour by publishing in regional languages and English. In his writings he tried to understand the interconnection between nationalism and the formation of social classes in India, rural society and agrarian social structure, the nature of the state and its role in development of a capitalist mode of production in independent India. In his other major works, such as *State and Society in India* (1975), *India's Path of Development* (1984) etc, he looked at the planned developmental model adopted by the Indian state after Independence. In, around five decades of his career he wrote around 25 books and many articles in regional publications.

Desai's works on sociological analysis extensively cover different aspects of Indian Society. He started his academic writing with the analysis of class and development of nationalism in pre-independent India. His works provide a comprehensive overview of the economic, social, cultural and political facets of colonial and post-colonial India from a Marxist perspective. According to him the process of social transformation in India was a result of a dialectical relationship between capitalist

bourgeoisie, the rural petty-bourgeoisie and a state apparatus developed as a result of colonial administrations.

4.2.1.1 Major Works

The most celebrated work of A. R Desai was his comprehensive analysis of the social background of Indian nationalism published in 1981. The book *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* focused on the formation of new classes and their influence in nation building. The analysis of the nation and class formation in the British period was followed by the study of the same in the post-independent period where his two works were published; *India's Path of Development: A Marxist Approach* (1984) and *The Public Sector in India* (1985). In the next level, he focused on the planning process and development in India and subsequent effects on Indian agrarian class structure. The works such as *A Positive Programme for Indian Revolution* (1974), *Economic Functions of the State in the Third World Countries: with Special Reference to India* (1977) were published during the time.

As a result of different developmental and agrarian policies in the post-independent state various social movements against dominant classes emerged. In different works, Desai studied the crisis of state-society relationships in the 1960s and 70s such as *State and Society in India* (1975), *Peasant Struggle in India* (1979), *Rural India in Transition* (1979) and *India's Path of Development* (1984). In the final phases he focused his discussions on the contemporary human rights movements, peasant movements, the state and repression and women and patriarchy (*Violation of Democratic Rights in India*, *Women's Liberation and Politics of Religious Personal Laws in India* (1986), *Repression and Resistance in India*, *Expanding Governmental Lawlessness and Organised Struggles* (1991). Through the

above mentioned works Desai made a radical shift from the dominant sociological paradigm that existed in post-independent India. During this time most of the sociologists focused on the caste, tribe, family and kinship and religion among the Hindu societies.

4.2.1.2 Methodology- Historical Materialism

Desai used methodology of historical materialism to understand the Indian socio-political reality. It was his influential contribution to the development of sociological studies on Indian society, polity and culture. Using the historical materialist analysis, he studied nearly three centuries of Indian history, starting from the feudal system to colonial and post-colonial times. He criticised mainstream sociology which focuses on civilisational and culturalist perspectives.

According to Desai, Sociology is an interdisciplinary Social Science which uses historical, political and economic perspectives to understand social phenomena. He used these perspectives to understand the characteristic features of nationalism, state formation and emergence of new classes in India. In the 1960s, after independence he focused on the implications of new development programs and policies initiated by the Govt of India. Thus, by and large he focused on the study of macro-social structures and political processes with an emphasis on the importance of historicising them in the specific context of India.

Desai's works led to a shift in the Bombay School of Sociology's perspective in the study of Indian society. From 1924 to 1959 the overall framework of Bombay School was dominated by the work of G. S. Ghurye. Firstly, a diversion is seen when Desai used historical and materialist postulates to study Indian society. As we discussed in the second block, Ghurye focused on the indological or textual approach which paid attention to the study of caste and village structure of the country. Secondly, a shift from micro social structure to a macro structure in the study of Indian social reality was developed and in the front, Desai's study focused on the different functions of the state and the process of emergence of Nationalism.

He was neither a conventional academic nor an activist. At the same time he was involved in both fields actively. As a scholar he tried to look at the Indian social and political reality from a Marxist perspective. As an activist he was involved in labor-union activities and mobilisation of different disadvantaged groups. In another word, he overlapped the worlds of both scholarship and activism in his personal life. He truly imbibed the Marxian spirit of the project of understanding the world and working for the transformation of it.

According to Desai, history is an essential component in the understanding of contemporary society and he stood against the creation of disciplinary boundaries between different social sciences. According to him, interdisciplinary approach will help to develop a holistic understanding of society. He emphasised on macro structures such as state, nation, class and posed a serious criticism towards the dominant structural functionalist analysis of 1960s and 70s of Indian Sociology.

4.2.2 Social Background of Indian Nationalism

During the 1940s, the world witnessed the emergence and growth of socialist ideologies and governments. By the 1960s, one-third of the world population lived in socialist countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Another major development of that time was the decline of British monopoly and the weakening of colonial powers across

the globe. Anti-colonial movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America led to the remarkable growth of nationalism in these countries. Desai's interest in Indian nationalism and its social background emerged from this particular situation. Hence, a detailed analysis of the emergence of Indian nationalism from a historical approach is overwhelming in the book.

Social Background of Indian Nationalism was his doctoral thesis carried out under the supervision of G.S. Ghurye. It offered a critical Marxian perspective to the social background of Indian nationalism. In this work, he exposed the upper caste and class nature of Indian nationalism. He used historical and interdisciplinary perspective to examine the relationship between nation, classes and power in the context of India. As he argued, even though the movement was successful with the mass involvement of different classes and castes, the upper class people forced their interests upon the subordinated classes.

Desai listed out some distinctive features of the *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge about the social change that took place in Indian society during the colonial period. In the 18th, 19th and early 20th century India witnessed a structural transformation in different aspects of life, such as new economic productions, new political and administrative systems, new means of transport and communication system, new educational system, and innovative bureaucratic and governance set-ups.

British rule also affected the existing feudal system as well as the caste based social hierarchies in India. All these changes led to the emergence of a capitalist system and new social classes in the Indian subcontinent. This work gave a scientific assessment of the social background of colonial expansion and

national movement against it. This scientific assessment provides a new perspective to look at the changes that took place in independent India.

Secondly, this book applied historical materialism or materialist conception of history of Marxist perspective to understand Indian socio-political and socio-cultural reality. This new approach helped us to understand the structural transformation during the specific colonial context as well as the class nature of the anti-colonial movement in India. Previous studies on Indian nationalism or colonial rule focused on specific aspects of it or in particular time frame.

Thirdly, the book provides some prophetic insights about the socio-cultural and economic impact of colonial rule, development of nationalism and the future of the development of an independent state. This book categorically states and urges that for a better and just mode of development political power of independent India should be in the hands of the working class and India should follow a socialist path of development.

4.2.2.1 Nationalism in India

Nationalism in India is a modern phenomenon which emerged out of the encounter with British rule. Different historical, socio-political and technological factors played a crucial role in the emergence of nationalism in India. In India's specific context, the study of nationalism and emergence and growth of national movements had a significant outcome. As we know, Indian society has a complex social system which is reflected in the process of the development of nationalism.

This multi-sided or layered social system generated a complex network of linguistic groups, ethnic communities, religious sects and caste groups. In this heterogeneous, socio-cultural and political context, along

with geographical enormity or vastness, diversity in the population make the study of the emergence and growth of Indian nationalism more interesting and engaging. Pre-colonial India was scattered into different small princely states with small administrative units. The British administration led India into a single administrative unit and established it as a centralised state. It drastically altered the economic structure of the society and established modern education institutions and new means of communications.

These new developments led to the breakdown of the Indian feudal system and it also altered traditional hierarchical structure. Subsequent changes in the economic structure of Indian society led to the emergence of new educated middle classes in India. This new social class developed an antagonistic relationship with British colonialism and became the centre of anti-imperialist struggle and motivation for the emergence of national consciousness and sentiments. In *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Desai tried to examine the role of different factors that contribute to the emergence of nationalism in India.

As a Marxist intellectual he attempted to analyse the question of nationalism from a class point of view. He paid attention to the relationship between the emergence of new classes during and after the British rule and the emergence of India as a nation-state after the independence. Desai used this framework to understand nationalism which emerged in the nineteenth century during the colonial period.

As we know, pre-colonial India lacks nationalist consciousness due to different reasons. Politically, in the pre-colonial period India was divided into different small princely states with separate administrative units. Geographically India was spread across the south Asian subcontinents without a proper network for communication and

transportations. Linguistically, India has thousands of languages and dialects which create hindrances for communication. The lack of common language also led to the absence of a national consciousness in the Indian subcontinent.

Economically, the entire country was divided into a number of self-sufficient village republics. They were mutually exclusive in character and engaged in independent economic activities. Socially, India was divided into different caste groups and religious communities. All these socio-economic-cultural factors contributed to the lack of national consciousness and thereby delayed the emergence of nationalism.

Desai tried to unearth the socio-economic-cultural and political roots of the emergence of nationalism in the backdrop of British rule in 18th, 19th and early 20th century India. According to him, different subjective and objective forces and factors due to the colonial interventions contributed for the emergence of national feeling in India.

Desai presented the book *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* with an overview of the notion of nationalism and its different meanings in various countries across the world. The social, cultural, political and economic root of the emergence of national sentiment is very important to understand the political sociology of modern India. To trace this history, Desai analysed the economy and culture of pre-British India and argued that India had a self-sufficient village economy based on agriculture sector with the primitive plough, bullock power and handicrafts by means of simple instruments reflecting a basic feature of pre-British Indian society.

4.2.3 State and Society in India

State and Society in India is a seminal work by A.R.Desai delves into the complex relationship between the state and society

in post - independent India, exploring the dynamics of power, class and governance. The central focus of Desai's work was on the capitalist transformation of India and the significant role of the state as a prime mover in this process. He analysed how the state, with its legal framework, administrative apparatus and major policy initiatives, facilitate capitalist development in the country. Desai argues that the state played a critical role in molding institutions that promote capitalist growth, including the public sector, planning and the mixed economy.

The work examined various key events in post - independent India, such as partition, communal tensions, the abolition of princely states, the development of the Indian union, the framing of the constitution, and the establishment of a welfare state. These milestone events are studied in the context of their impact on the state - society relationship.

In the earlier works on state - society relations, Desai primarily focused on the economic functions of the Indian state, class nature and class roles. However in later works, he shifted his attention to explore the repressive and ideological functions of the state. For instance, in works like '*Violation of Democratic Rights in India* (1986), '*Repression and the Resistance in India*' (1990), and '*Expanding Governmental Lawlessness and Organised Struggles* (1991), he critically analysed the emergence and development of the modern Indian state during and after the colonial period.

Desai challenges the widely accepted concept of modernisation and offers a theoretical critique of it. He places the state at the center of his analysis, shedding light on its role as a facilitator of social transformation and its potential to curtail the rights of the oppressed. He examines how the state, in its pursuit of capitalist modernisation, often adopts a repressive

stance, leading to growing resistance from various segments of society.

Significant aspect discussed is Desai's classification of democratic rights into three categories are: First, the rights of bourgeoisie property relations, which encompass the right to hold property and employ wage labor. Second, civil liberties that are products of the bourgeoisie revolution including freedom of speech, habeas corpus petition, freedom of press and public sector education. Third, the rights of the proletariat, such as the right to picket, strike and organise.

Desai highlights that the state increasingly repudiates the second and third categories of rights to intensify the generation of surplus value and capital accumulation. This intensified policing is attributed to the declining socio economic value of the capitalist framework , which leads to criticism of the sub standard and exploited living and labor conditions of the people.

4.2.4 Critique of Marxist Approach

Many sociologists, including those with Marxist perspectives viewed Desai's sociology project as primarily ideological and political. They believed that his work was oriented towards debates within the mainstream communist movement, especially regarding the strategies for achieving either a capitalist or socialist revolution. Some Marxist scholars criticised Desai's analyses, asserting that it lacked depth and was overly simplistic. According to them, his approach was unable to grasp the intricate complexities that shape the Indian experience of capitalism and the diverse nature of protests against it.

His work has faced criticism for lacking a theoretical framework to analyse and explore the interplay between class and caste, as well as their interactions with gender, ethnicity and language. Additionally, it does not provide a conceptual basis for examining the

complexities involved in identity formation within the subcontinent. His theory of identity is based on the straightforward notion that revealing exploitative experiences are essential for comprehending the exploitative processes.

In the Social background of Indian Nationalism, Desai contends that pre colonial India lacked private property and he characterises the village as self-sufficient, autocratic and unprogressive. This builds a very static and stagnant view of society that existed in pre colonial India.

Desai's theories have not led to the emergence of new theoretical frameworks concerning the subjects he examined, such as class and the impoverished laboring class, nation and nationalism, development and state policies. Moreover, his theories were unable to engage with the complexities that modernity brought up in the context of the Indian subcontinent.

In short, Desai uses a Marxist methodology to examine "nationalism" in India under British control. He defines historical-dialectical materialism and uses it to explore numerous trends, including rural and urban, caste and class structure, social mobility, education, and other facets of Indian society. He also defines historical-dialectical materialism. Despite the fact that Desai's book was released in 1948, it gained greater acclaim in the late 1960s and early 1970s, probably as a result of Indian social scientists' growing awareness of social self-consciousness. The Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Desai's first comprehensive work, set precedents not only for its academically Marxist perspective but also for the way it combined sociology and history. In his classic work, he uses production relations, much like other Marxists, to explain the underlying social underpinning of Indian nationalism.

What is wrong regarding Desai is that, despite his comprehensive analysis of the Indian situation using Marxist concepts, his use of actual evidence falls short. In other words, the support of considerable evidence might be used to test his theoretical framework. Following is a critique of Yogendra Singh: His primary assertions, which are frequently historiographic and open to question, lack considerable empirical data, which is an important shortcoming of the dialectical approach for studies of social change in India. He shows how qualitative changes in Indian society led to the emergence of the national consciousness. It must be noted that Desai has investigated the applicability of the Marxian framework to comprehend Indian reality in all of his books. All of Desai's other books share a Marxist perspective on Indian society.

Recap

- ♦ Akshay Ramanlal Desai (1915-94), a prominent public intellectual and Marxist Sociologist born on April 16, 1915 at Nadiad in Central Gujarat.

- ♦ By adopting Marxist perspective, Desai developed an alternative to the existing frameworks, such as the Indological and structural functional perspective.

♦ He developed an interdisciplinary sociology in which he alerted on the historical, political and economic dimensions of different phenomena.

♦ He wrote *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* in which he examined the social background of Indian Nationalism.

♦ Desai's works led to a methodological shift in the Bombay School of Sociology's perspective in the study of Indian society.

♦ In the first shift, Desai used a historical and materialist framework to study Indian society.

♦ Second, the shift from micro social structure to a macro structure brought in the study of Indian social reality.

♦ Desai published his classic work *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* in 1949.

♦ He examined the emergence of the different social, cultural and political forces which changed the social fabric of the country during the colonial context.

♦ The work tried to understand the social, cultural, political and economic roots of the emergence of nationalism in the Indian subcontinent.

♦ Desai's work on state and society relation explores repressive and ideological function of the state.

Objective Questions

1. Which School of Indian Sociology includes A. R. Desai?

2. When did Desai join the Department of Sociology as a faculty member?

3. Who wrote the *Social Background of Indian Nationalism?*

4. Who is the author of *India's Path of Development: A Marxist Approach*?

5. Which is the essential component in the understanding of contemporary society, according to Desai?

6. Who is the author of *State and Society in India* (1998)?

7. Which is the classic work of Desai published in 1949?

8. When was Desai's *Social Background of Indian Nationalism and Recent Trends in Indian Nationalism* published?

9. Which book of Desai offered a theoretical critique of the concept of modernisation?

10. Which is the book written by A.R. Desai in 1986?

11. What are the major works of A.R. Desai that study resistance in Indian society?

Answers

1. Bombay School

2. 1951

3. A.R.Desai

4. A.R.Desai

5. History

6. A.R.Desai

7. Social Background of Indian Nationalism

8. 1960

9. State and Society in India

10. Violation of Democratic Rights in India

11. Repression and the Resistance in India, Expanding Governmental Lawlessness and Organised Struggles

Assignments

1. Describe AR Desai's methodology used to study Indian society.

2. List out the distinctive features of AR Desai's work 'Social background of Indian Nationalism'.

3. Examine the socio-political-linguistic and economic diversities in India and critically evaluate the development of nationalism in the country.

4. Examine AR Desai's criticism towards modernization process in India.

Suggested Reading

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BLOCK

5

Synthesis of Textual and Field Views

UNIT 1

Irawati Karve: Kinship Organisation in India, Caste and Religion in the Pre and Post Aryan Period

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ understand the academic movement from textual view to field view in Indian Sociology

♦ introduce the contributions of Irawati Karve to the sociological understanding of kinship studies and caste in India

♦ understand Karve's conceptualisation of caste and religion in the pre and post Aryan period

Prerequisites

How did we learn about the different facets of life of the early man? Mostly through cave drawings, inscriptions and archaeological finds. Likewise when Sociology was brought into non western spaces like that of India similar practices were employed to learn of the societal practices unfolding in the day- to- day life of people. But was this an efficient method to study the lives of a living society? Did it bring out a closed perception of the old without considering the new? Often concepts were framed and analysed in comparison with those having western origin. In India the institution of Marriage is often considered traditional and sacred; anything that does not conform to this ideal type of marriage is considered deviant. With colonisation and later urbanisation the idea of traditional Indian society which predominantly followed a Hindu tradition was challenged, this opened up new avenues in the country. The new forms of marriage, relationships and caste practices were analysed from a traditional point of view by only giving emphasis to the textual view while dismissing the new practices brought about by new religions, advancement in employment, industry etc. In northern India there is the prevalence of patriarchal kinship whereas in the South, Matriarchal kin system is accepted. Thus it is not possible to have one holistic definition of sociological concepts in the Indian context, Karve explores and conceptualises Kinship with the help of textual methods in this unit. Let's understand how Kinship functions across the nation.

Keywords

Kin, Caste-clusters, Patrilineal, Patrilocal, Matrilineal, Matrilocal, Hypergamy, Gotra

Discussion

In the early discussions, we have looked at sociological concepts of both indologists, structural functionalists and Marxists. The indological perspective that depends highly on textual sources was known as 'Textual view' or 'Book view', a term used by M.N. Srinivas. Indian society was approached as different from European society and Indian civilisation was considered unique. On the other hand, the structural-functionalist approach of M.N. Srinivas was more of an anthropological approach that relied on first-hand experience of the researcher. They observe life in the field to reach functional conclusions about various social factors. The post-independence shift in sociological studies saw an interest in field work. Through the structural functionalists, fieldwork gained more significance in sociology in India. In this approach, Indian societies are best understood when a person uses his observation and thinking to analyse his or her experience in the field. Thus, in studying Indian villages, the 'field view' found more appeal.

The advocates of indological approach, like Ghurye and Dumont, as we have seen in the previous units, helped formalise the origin and ideological basis for the social structures like caste, family, etc. Structural functionalists like M. N. Srinivas and S. C. Dube worked on various Indian villages and published many works based on the participant observation. This generation of western scholars or Indian scholars trained in the west threw light on contemporary aspects of caste, gender and political setting of villages. Importance was given to various

concepts like modernisation, sanskritization and so on, that reflected the changes in these structures. The advocates of "Field view" believed that it was more suited to understanding contemporary society than the "Book view" which constructed India from the classical Hindu texts.

This unit will discuss how the two views or approaches to sociology can be read together to generate an understanding of various institutions of society, especially caste and family. We will look at how the increasing interest in village studies gave field-view more appeal and how this is reflected in the works of many sociologists in the post independence period. By looking at the works of Karve, who is often credited to have an indological approach and A. M Shah, an ardent advocate of fieldwork, we realise how this has come together in the current understanding of sociological institutions.

5.1.1 Synthesis of Textual and Field Views

During British colonial rule, India began to be pictured as a land of village communities. Though references to villages pre-dated colonial rule, this image of the Indian village community formed during British rule shaped the later writings on rural India. The colonial picture of Indian villages was often reflected as a self-sufficient community that has survived long to be assumed as stagnant. Indian villages soon became the representation of pre-modern or traditional society. The decaying village during the colonial rule was celebrated by the west, as it was to them a movement

towards modernisation. In the nationalist discourse, Gandhi and many others celebrated village life as the true Indian self and saw reconstruction of villages as important as political independence.

As Beteille describes, Indian villages were seen as the reflection of Indian values and civilisation. It was not merely residential areas, but a place where the researcher can observe the social relationships and social organisations of local people. The Western social theory viewed Indian villages and their values and institutional patterns to be "traditional", as opposed to the western "modernity". Thus to modernise the newly decolonised "third world" countries, the village had to be modernised. Village study soon gained in popularity and so did participant observation in village studies. This was due to the flux of change undergone by these villages with the new policies and strategies of independent India.

The Indological approach followed by Ghurye and Dumount lost its influence and the field view of structural functionalists like Srinivas gained popularity. G. S. Ghurye had been a staunch practitioner of indological tradition, referred to as the "armchair sociologist" by his student, M. N. Srinivas. Though he was a supporter of ethnographic research and data, he found these to be supporting material for the indological observations. The textual observations helped theorise and the data collected provided a backing. Many of his prominent students, notably Irawati Karve followed this method. Her study of kinship formed the ideal picture of family from the textual sources and posed this against her field data, arriving at conclusions like the disintegration of joint families.

In opposition to this method, A. M. Shah, a student of M. N. Srinivas believed that a true sociological approach would allow the theory to emerge from analytical observation of the field. He claimed the method of posing

ethnographic data against the preconceived notions that was textually developed as a flawed methodology. Karve and many of her contemporaries followed the normative or prescriptive method, wherein they believed the Indian family to ideally be a joint family. These prescriptive ideas were looked down upon by Shah, who clarified these conceptualisation itself to be wrong with his field work. He challenged the notions like the joint family as the ideal family organisation in India and nuclear family as the deviation. He placed the theories of various indological sociologists in contrast with his own observations of the life of the Indians. In the unit we will discuss in detail the sociological research of both Karve and Shah.

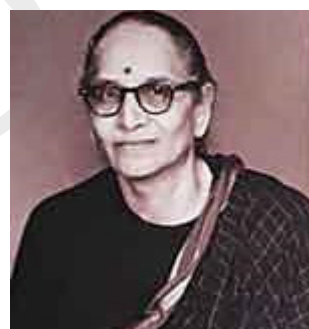## 5.1.2 Irawati Karve - Life and Ideology

Fig 5.1.2 Irawati Karve

Irawati Karve is the first Indian woman sociologist and anthropologist. She studied sociology under G S Ghurye. Born on December 15, 1905 and died on August 11, 1970, she lived through the phases of growth of Sociology as a discipline and also its professionalisation in India. Hailing from Maharashtra, she has to her name numerous works in Marathi. After graduation in philosophy from Fergusson College, she went on to major in Sociology. Under Ghurye she submitted the papers, *Folklore of Parshuram* and *Chitpavan Brahmin*. Receiving her master's in Arts in Sociology from Mumbai University in 1928,

she did her doctoral work in Anthropology from University of Berlin, under Eugene Fischer.

After receiving her doctorate in 1930, she returned to India and worked in Pune University. She also presided over the Anthropology Division of the National Science Congress held in New Delhi in 1947. For a short while, she also served as the Head of Department of Sociology in Pune University, later taking charge as the Vice-chancellor of SNDT College, where she held the position for a short period. It was later in 1951-52, that she prepared the first draft for the book on kinship organisation in India, while she was a guest at School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. She also spent her time in the US, as she was invited by the Rockefeller foundation, utilising it to the best through anthropological discussions with her colleagues, travelling between New York and San Francisco.

Irawati Karve subscribed to an indological tradition, whereby she looked to understand and obtain insights on contemporary practices through ancient Sanskrit texts. Ghurye influenced her widely and both believed in understanding kinship, caste and religion to understand Indian society. Both scholars, to a broad extent, saw Indian society as Hindu society. Another major influence on her was German physical Anthropology, from her time in Germany. The German anthropology of that time relied on marking physical characteristics in order to study race. Socio-economic research and archaeological explorations found place in her studies owing to her passion in fieldwork. She conducted widespread surveys as part of her works, influenced by the ethnographic tradition, which requires the researcher to spend a long time in the community studying and making detailed observations about their culture and society.

She is often associated with indological tradition as she looked to Sanskrit texts to develop an idea of the human origin of the Indian subcontinent. Yet her method cannot be understood as limited to an indological approach as she supplements the arguments developed from the textual sources with abundant research findings through her field work and genetic evidence. She even questions the notion of Ghurye that caste was the product of Indo-Aryan culture, with her field data.

5.1.3 Kinship Organisation in India

Irawati Karve dedicated a lot of work in studying the kinship practices in India, dividing between the four cultural zones. Her approach to kinship studies adopted a historical perspective and she studied the ethnographic sources, sanskrit texts and the folk literatures to study the regional differences and patterns of Kinship organisation in India. Her first book on *Kinship Organisation in India* was published in 1953. Her study divides India into Northern, Central, Southern and Eastern zones. The study of kinship for Karve was through understanding linguistic, caste and family organisation. The variations of kinship across India are compared with the vedic practices in various articles before she finally organised her kinship works into this book.

Karve observes that the Indian kinship organisation with its variation, is united at the point of clan exogamy and caste endogamy. Marriage across the Indian subcontinent was acceptable only within the same caste or tribe, making it caste endogamous. Whereas, marriage within the family, that is, between parents and children or between siblings was strictly forbidden, hence making the marriage clan exogamous.

The regional variation is observed and she divides the regions as:

1) The Northern zone consists of Punjab, Sindh, Hindi, Assami, Bihari, Bengali, Pahadi and Nepali. The kinship organisation here is an Indo-European or Sanskritic organisation. The kins follow patrilineal inheritance, so the sons and their family live together in an area or village. In terms of marriage the restriction is applicable on a large group of kins as well as space. Exogamy is practised along villages and gotras. The marriage within the patri-family and the sapindra kin (seven generations on the father's side and five on the mother's side) is prohibited and is referred to as the rule of sasan. Most of the upper castes avoid marriage with four gotras(sasan) of relations father, mother, grandmother and maternal grandmother. The lower castes place restrictions only on marriage between gotras of father and mother. This rule is strictly followed. Incest or marriage between relations is strict taboo.

The village exogamy is another practice observed in the Northern zone. The daughters are often married to different families and preferably, from different villages. If one daughter is married to a certain family or village, the younger ones are not married to the same family or village. Marriages to the family or village may be avoided even for two generations from the bride's family. Thus alliances are sought from a large region, usually a few neighbouring administrative districts or the whole linguistic region. The village and the family of the groom is supposed to be of a superior position than the village and family of the bride.

Along with that the Northern zone has two sets of relations- blood relations and affinal relations(relationship through marriage; in-laws). The daughters and brides also have different terms of reference. Due to local exogamy, women of a village are divided as 'daughters' and 'brides'. Coming to other relatives, terms like chacha, mama, mausi,etc refer to exact relation with the person. There are definite terms for at least three generations of relations, different for both blood and affinal relations. There is also a clear distinction between parallel and cross cousins, i.e. , children of same sex siblings and opposite sex siblings. A man's brother's children are bhatija and bhatiji while father's sister's children are bhanja and bhanji.

2)The Central zone includes Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kathiawad, Chattisgarh, Orissa, and Maharashtra. The region is attributed with a combination of kinship organisation of various patterns -Sanskritic, Dravidian and Mundari. We observe cross cousin marriages in this region similar to dravidian kinship. Yet there are exogamous clans within caste, similar to the sanskritic kinship of the north. The tribals of this region follow their own kinship rules.

The region is rich with variations. In Rajasthan, the Jats follow two gotra exogamy, while the baniyas follow four gotra exogamy. The Rajputs on the other hand, have clans that are arranged hierarchically and follow hypergamy, i.e, the men can take wives from the lower clans. They also consider the feudal status of the family as well as the status of the mother. Whereas in Gujarat, there are castes which allow cross-cousin marriage. Some peculiar practices like the limiting of marriage to once a year or every four years and so on are also observed. Some areas follow the practice of the widow marrying the dead husband's brother.

In Maharashtra, the sanskrit and dravidian kinship are combined in practice. The variation is extensive. There are areas that allow cross-cousin marriages, follow gotra exogamy, hypergamy, and even uncle-niece marriages. But these vary within the region itself and cannot be taken as the practice of the region as a whole. Among oriya speakers, the practice is generally northern. But some groups allow one type of cross cousin marriage.

3)The Southern zone includes areas like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. The southern area is mostly tagged to follow the Dravidian pattern. This area is studied with its own regional variations as some areas have patrilineal and patrilocal practices while the others have matrilineal and matrilocal systems. Castes like Nairs allow more than one husband and some castes like Namboothiris allow more than one wife. Thus, both polygyny and polyandry are observed in the region. The Bants of Kanara district in Karnataka and Moplahs of Malabar region and Nairs follow a matrilineal matrilocal family. There is also clan exogamy, where the members of the same 'illom', 'veli' and similar clans do not marry each other. But there is a possibility of marriage between cross-cousins and even between mother's younger brother and niece. There is restriction on a widow marrying her husband's brother.

The man can take his elder sister's daughter as his wife. This is due to a feeling of obligation to return a daughter in marriage as they had given their daughter away as a bride. But this is a taboo among matrilineal communities. The other practice is taking the father's sister's daughter as wife. Common in regions like Kerala, the cross-cousins are often referred to as Murapennu/muracherukkan. This also requires an exchange of daughters and a girl from the next generation of the groom's family is given in marriage. In cases like Kallar of Tamilnadu and Havik Brahmins of Karnataka, the maternal uncle's daughter can be chosen as wife. The man marries the daughter of his mother's brother.

The married daughter rarely feels a stranger in her husband's house as they are related in more than one way. Marriage is generally a practice to bring the family closer together unlike the north, where the daughter is sent away to an unfamiliar village. Taboo is applicable on parallel cousin marriages, i.e, father's brothers children or mother's sister's children. Widow remarriage is permitted in the southern region, but the widow cannot marry her late husband's brothers. Exception to this is observed in regions where the people have come in contact with the northern population.

The difference between family of birth and family of marriage is nearly non-existent in the southern zone, in contrast to the northern zone. The terms are usually used with respect to the age of the person as elder or younger. Respect for age is more important than the relationship in the south. The same terms are usually used for the affinal relations and blood relations.

4)The Eastern zone has no specific border division, but are mainly speakers of prominent northern languages as well as Monkhmer and Mundari. The communities included are a number of austro-asiatic tribes, especially in the north eastern part of India. Karve says that there are no definite clues to their laws and tradition. The various groups have been scattered. From observation of the scattered life it is difficult to devise a system of their own. These people have been highly influenced by the people around. Therefore, there is no one pattern or type to define their kinship organisation.

The Mundari kinship is prominent in this region. The family is mostly patrilineal and patrilocal. The khasi tribe is an exception and follows a matrilineal system. Parallel cousin marriages are not allowed. Cross cousin marriages are not taboo, yet are not observable in the region. The deviation from the joint family system is also observed in the region, where the husband and wife shift to a different household. Yet, they have much lesser rights in the bride's house than other matrilineal families.

The Ho and Santhal tribes have a patrilineal system and can marry cross-cousins after the death of an uncle or aunt. Some tribes

divide themselves as exogamous totemistic clans. There are observations of bride price in some areas, where the husband pays in service or money to the bride's family for marriage.

The various castes and sub-castes within these broader linguistic regions show variations and character of their own. The general nature of kinship organisation in the regions is drawn by Karve, acknowledging the variations. Karve also makes comparisons of northern practice of patri-clan exogamy and cross-cousin marriage in dravidian kinship, with respect to its effect on women. The women feel freer in the South as they are familiar with the family of her husband as they are maternal or paternal relatives. The patri-clan exogamy does not allow marriage among relations of the father whereas cross-cousin marriage allows the cousins from siblings of opposite sex to get married, that is, the children of a brother and sister can get married. The shift from north to south is said to account for the greater internal variations in the central zone as well as more hypergamy practices, where the person marries from a higher caste. The non-hindu society does not figure much space in her analysis of kinship organisation. Whereas, they are seen as deviant elements in most of her early works.

Karve, like most sociologists, saw joint family as an integral element of kinship practice in India. She mapped the changes in the joint family over time and also found it an essential part of life. She defines joint family as, "a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred". According to her, the joint family provided economic and social security. Though her analysis of kinship and marriage is credited to be from

the women-centric point, she was not radical and did not consider herself a feminist. The questions of oppression and patriarchy find no mention in her study of kinship and joint family system.

5.1.4 Caste and Religion in the Pre and Post Aryan Period

Karve in her work, *Hindu Society: An Interpretation* (1961), studies the caste system of India. Studies on caste have been the most extensive and prolific in Indian sociology, starting from origin and characteristics to caste mobility and global parallels. Karve's interest in caste was focused on the origin of caste and unit of analysis. She challenges Ghurye's argument of indo-aryan origin of caste and its diffusion. Ghurye conceived that caste was brought to India through the varna system of aryans and then diffused to the rest of the country. But Karve suggests the pre-aryan existence of a caste system.

Though the conception of a pre-aryan existence of caste system was not something new, Karve supported her argument with large field data. Her research findings were based on Ethnography and Physical Anthropology. She spent a lot of time in the field making observations and studying the physical characteristics. She also rejects the conception of jatis as formed from the fission of large caste groups, caused by migration and occupational diversification. She views jati as pre-aryan system and varna as the aryan system, which were interwoven to form the elaborate caste system in existence at her time.

For Karve, the sub-castes were different castes and she uses the term caste to refer to the units called jati. Larger groups like the Brahmins or Vaishyas were referred to as 'caste-clusters'. As mentioned earlier, she does not subscribe to the idea that caste fission formed subcastes. Caste clusters were

formed through attainment of the same social rank at different times and space by various jatis. The jatis are endogamous groups and retain their separate identity. For example, the namboothiri brahmins and the konkin brahmins of Kerala do marry between their castes, maintaining not just their brahmin identity, but also the namboothiri or konkin identity.

Karve makes a historical survey of these castes and dedicates a chapter to this in her book, *Hindu Society: An Interpretation*. The popular belief in her time about caste with reference to the term varna in sanskrit, was the possible distinction of aryans with pre aryan residents of India, owing to the different skin colour. The Aryans were Europeans or Central Asians and their fairer skin colour gave more strength to this equation of varna with colour. According to Karve, varna in the sacred text implied a 'class'. Thus the Aryan use of varna indicated the class of people in a particular order. The reference to the three varnas in the vedic literature can be seen as the priests, the nobles and kings, and the commoners. The conquered non-aryan masses or the pre-aryan residents of India formed the fourth varna, the shudras.

The first mention of jati is in the compilation called *Manusmriti,* where he defines these sub-castes as a result of intercaste marriages or cross marriages. Though Manu names some of these castes, he is unable to name all castes resulting from these crossings. Karve speculates the possibilities of pre-aryan existence of caste, in the form of jatis from Manu's inability to frame his concept with clarity. Karve believed that Manu, in his book about rights and duties of different groups, brings jati into the varna framework familiar to him, without understanding it. She further extends her argument with reference to the specialisation of streets in the Harappan excavations, where a whole street with stone mortars were found, similar to the caste settlements in India. She also tries to add strength to her hypothesis of possible existence of pre-aryan caste by referring to drawing a comparison of jatis with tribes in endogamic practices, social control through internal agents and regions of spread. She also claims that the hierarchy among castes is observed in many multi-tribe societies like that of Africa.

As for religion, Karve observes that the many aryan deities like the Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni and so on can be seen in the hymns of Rigveda. She points out that the Gods like tryambak and mother Goddess (Harappan civilisation) were added later, and belonged to the pre-aryan residents of India. The idea of rebirth too was not originally indo-european, that is Aryan or Greek. The early philosophies of the Aryans seem to have incorporated many concepts and ideas of the pre-aryan. The multiple thoughts were integrated into a framework that justified the caste system. The post Aryan religion had ideas of karma, dharma and rebirth, where a man is travelling to the state of Brahman, the ultimate stage. For the actions on earth, that is the karma, a man will spend time in both heaven and hell. The rebirth can be as a non-human or in the upper or lower caste, depending upon the positive or negative actions in the previous birth that have not been exhausted with their time in hell or heaven. The ultimate attainment of the state of Brahman(not to be confused with the caste, brahmin), ends the cycle. Other post aryan religions like Jainism and Buddhism also share the ideas of hell, absolute reality or Brahman and karma.

In short, Karve was an Indologist in the traditional Orientalist sense, searching for insights into modern practise in old Sanskrit literature. Karve's work exhibits a strong influence from Ghurye. They held similar views regarding the significance of family, kinship, caste, and religion as the

cornerstones of Indian culture, as well as a generalisation equating Hindu society with Indian society. She compares society to a quilt/blanket, saying that just as a finished blanket is made up of pieces of various colours and sizes. In the same way, society is made up of various individuals who come together, form relationships with one another, mingle with one another, and eventually split apart yet the thread that binds them all together still exists. Kinship is a complicated phenomenon that always play a crucial role in contemporary organisations. The kinship structures and laws of clan organisation have been diminished by migration, mobility, and education etc. as individuals are moving away from joint families and towards nuclear families.

Recap

♦ Irawati Karve was influenced by indological approach, ethnography and German anthropology.

♦ Karve, like Ghurye, equated Indian society with Hindu society.

♦ Karve makes regional comparisons of kinship terms and practices.

♦ The kinship organisation was identified as Indo-european or Sanskritic in the north, Dravidian in the south, Mundari in the east and a mix of these in the central zone.

♦ Karve claimed that joint family was integral to the Kinship system and she viewed both family and marriage from a women-centric point.

♦ Karve did not analyse non-Hindu society in her Kinship organisation rather saw them as deviant elements.

♦ *Hindu Society: An Interpretation* (1961), studies the caste system of India and attempts to trace the origin and characteristics of caste by making global parallels.

♦ In Karve's study of caste, she proposes a possibility of pre-aryan existence of caste, challenging Ghurye's view that caste was an Aryan invention to maintain the racial purity of Brahmins.

♦ Karve claims the caste system to be a combination of aryan varna and pre-aryan jati and post aryan religion to be a combination of pre-aryan and aryan religious philosophy.

♦ Karve supplemented her textual arguments with evidence from her field work, thus she followed a combination of textual view and field view.

Objective Questions

1. Who influenced Karve to follow the indological approach?

2. What type of kinship organisation is present in the northern zone?

3. Which zone consists of a combination of sanskritic, dravidian, and mundari kinship?

4. What are the two sets of kin relations witnessed in the northern zone?

5. Which vedic text first mentioned jati?

6. Which term according to Karve is identified as castes, contrary to it being called the sub -castes?

7. Which year was *Hindu Society: An interpretation* published?

8. Which work by Karve divulges on Kinship and different cultural zones of Kinship?

9. Which method did Karve advocate for primarily?

10. What was the prominent language of the eastern zone?

Answers

1. G.S. Ghurye

2. Indo-european or Sanskritic

3. The Central zone

4. Blood and affinal relations

5. Manusmriti

6. Jati

7. 1961

8. Kinship Organisation in India

9. Indological Approach

10. Monkhmer and Mundari

Assignments

1. Discuss the disposition of caste and religion in pre and post Aryan times?

2. Examine the kinship order as Karve narrated in terms of four cultural zones?

3. Examine how Karve synthesised textual and field view?

4. Define and examine the northern and southern zone of kinship organisation by Karve?

Suggested Reading

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2

A.M. Shah: The Household and Family in India

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ familiarise the major works of A.M.Shah.

♦ understand A.M.Shah's aspects on the household and family system in India.

♦ explain the evolutionary process of household and family in India.

Prerequisites

Family is a universal concept yet there are geographic and demographic differentiation to this concept. How do we understand the concept and type of family that exists in Indian society? Indian family structure has a traditional social base in which joint and extended family are the popular one, which gradually shrink into nuclear family due to external and internal factors. The discourses related to this structural change is a result of modernisation and industrialisation. However, A.M. Shah sought a distinctive approach in the late 1950s by conducting a field investigation in Radhvanaj village, located in central Gujarat. His focus centred on a conceptual interpretation of the Indian joint family, adopting an analytical lens rather than relying solely on descriptive sources and historical texts. Shah gave importance to field view and asserting that this approach was integral in achieving conceptual clarity regarding social constructs like the Family in India. He points that majority of anthropological and sociological inquiries concentrated on the challenges stemming from shifts within Indian family social structure. Hence, he highlights the necessity for a new framework to understand the transformations occurring within the Indian family structure. Shah points that there is no change in the Indian family structure, instead he identified modification in the nature of family in India.

Keywords

Joint family, Elementary family, Simple household, Complex house

Discussion

5.2.1 A.M. Shah

Fig 5.2.1 A.M Shah

Aravind Manilal Shah (1939-2020) completed both his graduation and Doctorate from MS University where he was trained under M. N. Srinivas. He joined the Department of Sociology at Delhi University and was one of its first faculty members. He retired in 1996 but had been an active contributor to Sociology till he passed away in September of 2020. He wrote mostly on caste, family and household and did most of his field work in Gujarat. His contribution to the study of family and household in India is very significant.

Having been trained in the historical perspectives of Sociology, Shah constructed the structure and change among the villagers of Gujarat by conceptualising caste and family from a historical perspective. In this attempt he had consulted many primary archival sources as he deemed necessary to his study but did not rely on the various indological texts, especially Hindu scriptures to study the history. He remains an exception in the Delhi school, dominated by structural-functionalism, which subscribed to the idea that in understanding present day structures, history is irrelevant. He also poses questions on whether ancient Hindu Law should be read as a sociological fact or not.

He published his first work on family, *The Household Dimensions of the Family: A Field Study in a Gujarat Village* in 1973. Shah set out to start a new phase in studying family. He challenged the framework of studying family and household. For studying family and household in India, he believed that the right way was through analytical descriptions. The joint and nuclear family dichotomy is quite useless as an analytical tool in the opinion of Shah. A considerable part of his professional life was devoted to bringing more clarity to the traditional Indian joint family, which he believed was being misrepresented in the various sociological studies. Conceptual clarity was key in all his work and he did not agree with those who read too much into the past from the limited resources or made sweeping statements on any concepts.

5.2.2 The Household and Family in India

The Sociology of family has always been interested in the classification of family and defining its types. The joint family is a predominant concept of family in India. Most sociologists before and during the time of Shah's work believed that joint family was the base of the family structure in India. Many claim that with the arrival of the British, modern education and urban work led to the decline of joint families, giving way to nuclear families. The joint family is typically a shared living where more than two generations of related males live with their wives and sons, under the same roof.

They share the property, worship common deities and cook at the same.

There are some scholars who differ from the previous conception and argue that the joint family may not always stay under the same roof. Many labourers who migrated to the cities still maintained their ties with the family who stayed back. They sent home money to take care of the family and had ownership of the property back home. To counter these differences and confusion, Shah called for a distinction of the "household" and "family". He claimed that this distinction would bring more clarity into the study of family systems in India. The role of 'joint family' was in the legal sense related to inheritance. In other contexts, 'joint household' was found apt.

According to Shah, who studied the family structure in the Radhvanaj village of Gujarat, a household is *a* residential and domestic unit composed of one or more persons living under the same roof and eating food cooked in a single kitchen. The households were known as *chula* or *ghar*. Additionally, he rejects the terminologies like, *extended*, and *joint* family and adopts terms like *simple household*, *complex household*, and *elementary family*.

Shah's stress on field work and participant observation is visible in the extensive data he collected and compiled on the families in Radhvanaj village apart from official records like the British administrative records, he also made use of information available in the stone inscription from archeological ruins, as well as from the Vahivancha Barot, a caste of genealogists (who traces or studies lines of family descent). Looking at the terms he defines relating to family, especially in the context of radhvanaj village, we understand that,

A) **Elementary family** is a unit consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. The children would also include

adopted and ritual children, as well as the remarried wife's children in the first marriage, if brought along.

B) **Simple household** is a complete or incomplete elementary family. A complete simple household would consist of a father, wife and children. Unmarried daughters remain part of this household. For Shah, the elementary family is not the same as 'simple household'. A complete elementary family living in one household is one of the many types of 'simple households'. In simple household, there could be incomplete elementary families that consist of

  i. Widowed mother and unmarried child,

  ii. Widowed father and unmarried child,

  iii. A married couple, and

  iv. A single man or woman.

C) **Complex household** on the other hand consists of more than one parental family. There could be more than one parental family, or parts of more than one parental family living together. That is, a man, his wife and children, along with possibly his brother, brother's wife and children or his brother and unmarried sister, his parents and siblings and so on. In Shah's field study, the complex households were fewer than the simple households and mostly consisted of one or both parents and a married son with his family. The other types of complex household observed were,

  i. One or both parents along with two or more married sons, and

  ii. Two or more married brothers living together. This happens due to the death of parents.

In his field study of the Radhvanaj area, he observes 18 variations to the types of

household based on kinship relations. The different households according to Shah, are a phase in the development process of households. Out of the 18 types, the first 12(32% of total households) are categorised as complex. The remaining 6 types constitute 68% of the total households and are categorised as simple households. The household data is given in the table below.

Table 5.2.1 Types of households based on Kinship

1. Married male siblings, their wives, unmarried brothers, the husband's widowed mother and so on.	6
2. One married man with one or more siblings.	5
3. A parental unit and one married son.	28
4. A parental unit, one married son and unmarried children.	26
5. A parental unit and two or more married sons	15
6. Widowed daughter and/her children	5
7. Widowed sister and brother's family	3
8. Parents with widowed daughter and children	1
9. Widow, brother's son and his wife	2
10. Sister's children with her mother's brother	3
11. Widowed mother, son-in-law and family	1
12. Husband and wife with relatives of wife's parental home	2
13. Single man/woman	34
14. Brother and sister	1
15. Mother and unmarried children	9
16. Father and unmarried children	6
17. Husband and wife	9
18. Husband, wife and unmarried children	125

From this data, he also observes that a residential unity is maintained with the male patrikin's in the region of Radhvanaj. The daughters remain in the household only till marriage, while the sons live together, along with their wives and children. Most households care for the son's widowed wife and children as they are now part of this household. Depending on progression through marriage, birth, etc or regression through death, marrying off, etc, each type of household is either moving towards or away from simple or complex households. "Every simple household belongs to one of the faces in the developmental process along the line set by the principle of residential unity of Patrikin and their wives. Every simple household belongs to one of the phases in the process of progression towards and regression from such a household".

According to Shah, the developmental process is due to three factors.

i. The first is the demographic factor, which includes not only the phenomena of birth, adulthood, and death but also the sex and number of persons. While these phenomena are demographic in origin, they are social in operation.

ii. The second factor is the series of explicitly stated norms regarding the residence of various relatives in a household.

iii. The third is the pattern of interpersonal relations in a household.

He also reframes the question of disintegration of joint family with the question of disintegration of joint household. The disintegration may seem like a reality to a lot of the urban dwellers, especially the westernised professionals of the upper middle class. He claims that there is a greater degree of joint household living for the majority of Indians in contrast to this upper middle class reality.

Shah also argues that the joint household is traditionally characteristic of the upper caste and upper class, as it is very much rooted in property rights and Sanskritic religion. As we move down the ladder of caste and class, we would observe an absence of this system of joint households. In the lower castes and tribal communities, sometimes the married son begins their married lives in the separate hut built in the vicinity of the parental home. The upper caste, especially the middle class is disintegrating into nuclear households, with growing need to separate into individual units for self-realisation and individual freedom. On the other hand, the lower castes, forced by the social as well as economic changes are now integrating to joint households. Thus, to him the understanding

or claim of decline in joint households is unidirectional and flawed.

Shah does not fail to consider the nomads and similar groups, who may not necessarily live in a house. The household therefore, whether they live in a house or not, consist of a domestic group who are related through kinship and marriage.

To conclude, A.M.Shah's works have several significant consequences, one of which is that we need to reconsider how we think about households and families in ancient India. However, Shah is sceptical about the likelihood of applying "the traditional literature for researching developments in modern families. It makes no distinction between "family" and "household," contains no data on the various household types and their frequencies, and is silent regarding the distinctions that must have existed between various segments of Indian society at various points in time. A.M.Shah mixes micro and macro viewpoints and provides a thorough analysis of the myth that joint families are "in decline" as a result of economic modernization. Shah's works serve as primary text for many kinship studies in India. His works address a wide range of theoretical, methodological, substantive, and policy issues pertaining to the family. He also discussed the impact of family changes on the elderly, the value of census data for household studies, and the state of family studies in India today from the perspective.

Recap

♦ A. M Shah was strongly influenced by fieldwork tradition and participant observation.

♦ Shah insisted on the distinction of 'family' from 'household', as it would bring more clarity to studying family in India.

- Shah describes a household as a residential unit, with more than one person living under the same roof and eating the food that is cooked in the same kitchen.

- Elementary family is a unit consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children.

- A simple household would consist of a father, wife and children.

- A simple household that is composed of incomplete elementary families may consist of Widow mother and unmarried child, Widow father and unmarried child, a married couple, and a single man or woman.

- He adopts terms like 'simple household', 'complex household' and 'parental family' to define household types.

- He argues that the disintegration of joint households is upper caste and middle class reality, while the majority of India remains separate from this.

- Complex family consist of more than one parental family

Objective Questions

1. Who influenced A.M Shah towards field view and participant observation?

2. Which village was studied by A. M Shah in his field works for caste and family?

3. Who made the distinction between family and household in the study of family in India?

4. According to A. M Shah, what type of family is defined as consisting of a man, his wife, and unmarried children?

5. Which type of family is made up of a single unit of a complete or incomplete parental family living in a household?

6. What kind of household is composed of more than one parental family?

7. When was the book *The Household Dimension of the Family in India: A Field study in a Gujarat Village and a review of other studies* published?

8. What are the two processes that every simple household belongs to as one of the phases in the developmental process of a household?

9. Who observes the disintegration of the joint household as an upper caste reality?

10. What are the factors that influence either the progression or regression in households according to Shah?

Answers

1. M.N Srinivas

2. Radhvanaj in Gujarat

3. A. M Shah

4. Elementary family

5. Simple household

6. Complex household

7. 1974

8. Progression, regression

9. A. M. Shah

10. Demography, norms of residence and interpersonal relations

Assignments

1. Examine how Shah disproved the claim that Joint families were the base of familial structure in India and the arrival of the British led to the disintegration of it?

2. Discuss the family structure put forth by Shah and elaborate on the types of family?

3. Explain the differentiation between family and household as narrated by Shah on the basis of his field work in Radhvanj.

4. Discuss how Shah synthesised field view and book view in his study of family and household?

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6

BLOCK

Subaltern Perspectives

B.R. Ambedkar : Caste and Annihilation of Caste, Constitutional Democracy

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ narrate subaltern perspective and the contribution of Ambedkar in it

♦ describe the perception of the depressed class or dalits with the Ambedkar movement

♦ discuss Ambedkar's philosophy on caste, religion, and governance

Prerequisites

You can see cabins if you visit a workplace. The nature of office spaces are set up in accordance with the hierarchy of power; there are lower grade and higher grade people. What would be the criteria for this division? That is, differences in capitals acquired by people leads to different social positions in the society. Likewise, in India the most significant capitals which summoned people into different status are their religion and caste. Hence, people are divided into superior and inferior categories according to their position in the hierarchy of the caste system; those in the inferior category are viewed as subordinates or deprived and they can be referred to as 'subaltern'. For example, in Indian society, the lower castes are regarded as weaker just because of the lack of equal access and distribution of chances and possibilities in acquiring the different forms of capital. In order to balance the power system, the low category should come forward. One of the low-caste freedom fighters, B.R. Ambedkar, the father of the Indian constitution, fought for equality. B.R. Ambedkar fought for the upliftment of the downtrodden class.

Keywords

Dalit, Subordinates, Dominant class, Untouchables, Superior, Political economy

Discussion

For a clear understanding of subaltern perspectives, we must understand the word "subaltern," which generally means "subordination." This means that, for example, caste, gender, class, age, etc., are expressed in terms of subordination. Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci coined the term "subaltern," which describes social groups that are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. For a detailed understanding, we have to explain that caste has its own division or classification on the basis of superiority or inferiority. According to that, only Brahmins and the Nayar community in Kerala are considered upper caste. Historically, those deemed superior in terms of political and economic power have had numerically dominant classes. Similarly, scheduled castes and tribes are considered lower in the sense of power. As a result, they are classified as low-caste or subordinate. Similarly, in the case of age, children or elderly people are observed as subordinate because of their unproductive characteristics. The study of the subaltern literally means that perspective from below; for a consciousness spread among the people or society. Subaltern studies examine the "binary relationship" of the subaltern and the governing classes, and thus analyse the relationship of dominance and subordination in colonial systems. Subaltern studies as a whole aims to expose the histories of categories that within the colonial and nationalist archives have been largely moved to the margins or undocumented altogether. The downtrodden underclass in a culture where the hegemon exercised hegemony was the subject of India's subaltern sociology.

The most influential proponent of "subaltern perspective" was B R Ambedkar. He played a significant role in improving the lives of Dalits. Since the Ambedkar movement, the term "Dalit" has come to represent social and political consciousness. Ambedkar's subaltern philosophy placed emphasis on the Dalits' empowerment and emancipation.

6.1.1 Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Fig 6.1.1 B.R. Ambedkar

B.R. Ambedkar was born into the untouchable caste of Mahar-Dalit. His ancestors and father were servants of the British Army. He also served as the Subedhar of the British Army. Although from his childhood, he suffered exclusion and caste discrimination in schooling. He was segregated and was not allowed to sit inside the class; they were not allowed to touch either the water or the vessels that contained it; if he wanted to drink it, it would be poured by someone from a higher caste. Usually, school peon was served the water. If the peon was not available, then he had to

go without water. From these discriminatory experiences, he later wrote *No Peon, No Water.*

Ambedkar studied at Elphinstone High School in Mumbai as the only untouchable student when his family relocated there in 1897. He passed his matriculation exam in 1907 and, according to him, became the first member of his caste from the Mahar to register at Elphinstone College, which was associated with the University of Bombay, the following year. He graduated from Bombay University in 1912 with a degree in economics and political science. In addition to economics, he also studied Sociology, History, Philosophy, and Anthropology as he completed his M.A. in June 1915. His thesis was on Ancient Indian Commerce. He finished his second master's thesis in 1916 for a second M.A., titled "National Dividend of India: A Historic and Analytical Study." He gave a presentation on *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis, and Development* on May 9 in front of an Anthropologist named Alexander Goldenweiser. In 1927, Ambedkar graduated from Columbia University with a Ph.D. in Economics.

Writings of Ambedkar

♦ *The Untouchables, Who were they?*

♦ *Who were the Shudras?*

♦ *State and Minorities?*

♦ *Emancipation of the Untouchables*

♦ *Annihilation of Caste*

6.1.2 Views on caste: concept of Dalit- Ambedkar Movement

The caste system in Indian society has prevailed for centuries. It divides all the members of society into hierarchical categories.

Ambedkar identified caste as an important institution. According to Ambedkar, the caste system has either been imposed upon the docile population of India by Hindu laws. His prime concern is the lower caste or lower section of Indian society.

The concept of Dalit is mainly used to refer to the Schedule Caste, which denotes the untouchable caste or depressed classes. The term "Dalit" includes all the oppressed and exploited sections of society. This is the suppression of the value system or culture, which has traditionally emerged from the political category, according to Hindu values and conduct. The untouchables were placed at the bottom of the hierarchy and had different names in different regions of the country. Mahatma Gandhi called them "Harijan-Hari", meaning "God". "Jan" means people or man. It literally means "Man of God." The Government of India Act-1935 mentioned scheduled caste—a list of a caste. Who belongs to the lower section of society and locally, it's popularised in the name of Shudras, Chandalas, Avarnas, etc.

Ambedkar also refers to Dalits as "antya" because they were forced to live at the far end of the village. According to him, the Dalits of today are the descendants of these broken men, and so of the original residents of this country. He wanted to emancipate the dalits or Scheduled Caste people by building an egalitarian social order. For that, he wanted to break the fold of Hinduism. Dalits belong to the bottom line of the hierarchical social structure. He asserted that, "Dalits will be uplifted by education because it will make them more inclined to organise and agitate for their rights." He believed that no one else could know better than themselves about their own state of affairs. So, he inspired the lower sections to fight for themselves when he went down to the freedom movement. Although he fought for the lower section of society, he argued

that the downtrodden should come forward themselves. Therefore, the concept of "Dalit" is a product of Ambedkar's movement.

He also realised that the caste system in Indian society would discriminate against the weaker sections of society. The oppressive nature of the caste system was propagated by the sacred shastras or sacred writings, such as Manusmriti, which sanctioned the severest punishment for the lower caste . Look at the quote of "*Manusmriti*": Manusmriti VIII-272 "The king shall have poured flaming oil in the mouth and ears if a shudras arrogantly presumes to preach religion to Brahmin". It embodied the Brahminic culture that discriminated against lower caste people. In the case of Ambedkar, he was discouraged by the discrimination. Hence, the Vedas excluded upper-caste people from various punishments. Low-caste people are deprived of the right to express their views and freedom of speech is denied.

Therefore, he set fire to copies of the classic Hindu work Manusmriti (Laws of Manu) at a conference in late 1927, which he had openly condemned for its views on caste prejudice and "untouchability." On December 25, 1927, he gave orders to hundreds of followers to burn copies of Manusmriti. Manusmriti Dahan Din (Manusmriti Burning Day) is therefore observed by Ambedkarites and Dalits on December 25 each year.

Ambedkar's movement was popularised in the name of *The Dalit Bahujan Samaj*, which incorporates subaltern ideologies of Jyothi Rao Phule's and Periyar E.V. Ramaswami Naicker. In order to criticise pre-colonial Brahmanism, he developed his nationalism. His nationalist movement was anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmanical in nature. He incorporated nationalism with a perception of oppression and aspiration. It is intended to create an egalitarian or equal society, such as one without castes or classes, where there would be no discrimination based on place of birth or type of work?

Ambedkar studied Dalit issues using a demonstrative approach. His work, titled "Who were the Shudras?" is an analytical study based on the text and archival records. The works of the "Untouchables" give descriptions of the features of a certain group. Ambedkar called himself a progressive radical and occasionally a progressive conservative. He was inspired by the demand for fraternity in the French revolution—there was seen in him a call for community. His consideration was a notion of community rather than the consideration of equality and equality of respect. However, he identified the critical role of a state. This was seen in his construction of a constitution for a state. He claims that the Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy endorsed economic democracy. He alluded that the state has limited their interventions to an important role in the economy based on the rights of the regime. He emphasised the embedded ideology of linguistic and cultural claims, ethnic identities, and so on. Construct the division of the majority and minority. When he felt the minority group was victims, he favoured the majority group and the rule of law. He emphasised that special treatment for minorities will foster democracy.

He was influenced by Marxism, particularly after the independence of India. However, he rejected the invention of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He felt Buddhism, which called for self-control and a moral foundation for society, could provide the missing dimensions for a socialist project and, for that purpose, called for a dialogue between Marxism and Buddhism. Ambedkar wished to place Buddhism on the path of Marxism and vice versa.
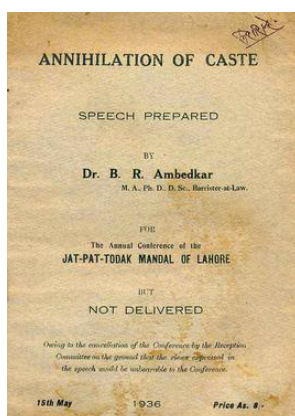
6.1.3 Annihilation of Caste

Fig 6.1.2 Annihilation of Caste

B. R. Ambedkar wrote the famous speech *Annihilation of Caste* in 1936. Ambedkar had sent the speech in advance to organisers in Lahore for printing and distribution as an article with the working title "Annihilation of Caste". In the essay, Ambedkar criticised the Hindu religion. He identified that Hinduism has lots of ideological splits. Ambedkar declared in 1935 that even though he was born a Hindu, he would not pass away like a hindu. He began to think of converting to any other religion because he saw Hinduism as an "oppressive religion." He argued that Buddhism was against the degradation of Aryan society, which had popularised the Varna system, and so the "Buddha Sangha" became a path of the movement towards empowering the common man. Ambedkar developed a new interpretation of Buddhism. This is popularised under the name of "Ambedkar Buddhism".

Ambedkar traces the social transformation. Therefore,he divided it into the following stages: Vedic society and its degradation into Aryan society; the rise of Buddhism and the social and moral transformation it set into motion; and finally, the counter-revolution and the rise of Brahmanism.He highly criticised the Hindu sacred texts and literature. His work *The Buddha and His Dharma* preached and presented the central teaching of the Buddha with contemporary relevance and the respect of humanity. Furthermore, he alluded to the ideology of Buddhism as opposed to Hinduism. Ambedkar argues in *Annihilation of Caste* that eliminating the notion of the Shastras' purity and rejecting their authority is the only long-term approach to attaining a truly casteless society. Ambedkar wrote a book titled *Riddles in Hinduism in 1954–1955*, which was critical of Hindu holy writings and epics. There were both large-scale protests and counter-protests after the work was combined from separate chapter manuscripts and published afterward. Just weeks before his demise, he converted to Buddhism on October 16, 1956.

Ambedkar agitated against Hinduism because of untouchability, and he criticizes caste endogamy and its aftermath in Indian society. Ambedkar emphasized the essential features of caste endogamy. In his view, Endogamy is the only characteristic that is peculiar to caste.

6.1.3.1 Untouchability and Caste - Oppositions

Ambedkar emphasised the caste-based division of labour in society and the absence of inter-dining. He explained his discriminatory experiences, when he launched an investment advisory company and worked as an accountant and private instructor, but it failed once his clients discovered that he was untouchable. His book, *Waiting for a Visa*, contained a description of the occurrence. He was appointed Professor of Political Economy in 1918 at Mumbai's Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics. Other professors took issue with him sharing a water jug with the students, despite the fact that he was effective with them. He also identified "caste name" as an important feature of inequality in the social structure. He eagerly stressed that caste is an essential feature of

the Hindu religion. That denial is bending the community's bonds. So he proposed the solution of the annihilation of caste. As a result, he proposed inter-caste marriage and inter-dining, both of which weaken the enduring caste bond.

He differentiated the institutions of caste from those of untouchability. We already mentioned that Ambedkar emphasised that the untouchables have to fight for themselves. The Southborough Committee, which was drafting the Government of India Act 1919, had summoned Ambedkar to provide testimony. Ambedkar argued during this session in favour of separate electorates and reserves for untouchables and other religious groups. Ambedkar eventually started working as a lawyer. While practising law in the Bombay High Court, he worked to uplift untouchables by encouraging them to pursue education. His first organised effort was the founding of the central organisation, Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, which aimed to advance socioeconomic development, education, and the welfare of "outcastes," or what were then known as the depressed classes. He founded a number of publications, including Mook Nayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, and Equality Janta, to advocate for Dalit rights. In 1927, Ambedkar made the decision to launch active campaigns against untouchability. To open up public drinking water resources, he started with protests and marches. Additionally, he started to fight for the right to access Hindu temples. He led a satyagraha in Mahad to fight for the untouchable community's ability to access the town's primary water tank.

Ambedkar did not go into the question of the origin of untouchability. Ambedkar tried to construct a separate identity of shudras and he himself identified as non-brahmins and he proposed a Naga identity .which is significant achievement in thought process of Indian civilisation. His works about primitive tribes are known as criminal tribes. He basically views them as outside the pale of civilization. Basically, Hinduism confirms them as subhuman levels. He believed that low-caste people or untouchable communities formed a common constituency.

6.1.4 Constitutional Democracy

Ambedkar desired civil rights and equality for those who had been denied them for decades. According to Ambedkar, Indian society was a structure that did not allow for the development of the equality and fraternity sentiments that are necessary for a democratic type of government. Basic human rights are denied to a large number of people. For that, he advocated constitutional protections for the oppressed. Ambedkar believed that Indian society could be summed up as a caste system with an upward scale of respect and a declining scale of disrespect. Ambedkar had an open mind when it came to foreign rule. Ambedkar believed that even though the British attitude was indifferent toward eliminating some social evils simply because its intervention in the then-existing code of social and economic life would spark resistance. Some social evils that had horrified the lives of downtrodden people still needed to be eradicated. Even if foreign rule had the potential to be a force in a nation like India, Ambedkar's sense of nationalism developed properly via the fight against such British authority, as he emphasised on constitutional safeguard for citizens.

Constitutional democracy was the focus of his primary area of study. He was a crucial figure in creating the framework for India's constitution. On August 15, 1947, Ambedkar accepted Jawaharlal Nehru's offer to become the State of India's minister of law. Two weeks later, Ambedkar was appointed chairman of the committee responsible for writing the future Republic of India's constitution. The

Indian constitution guarantees and safeguards a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens, including freedom of religion, the abolition of untouchability, and the prohibition of all forms of discrimination.

He expressed that Democracies are essential for expressing social justice. He set down some requirements in this regard. "Democracy is not a kind of government but a form of social organisation," he said. Dr. Ambedkar always had a socialist philosophy. This is evident in his views on democracy. He believes that the best way to establish socio-economic democracy is to first achieve political democracy. Because citizens of any nation cannot enjoy their freedoms without corresponding rights, political, social, and economic democratic ideas are still relevant today. The continuation of all three democracies is important to achieving the equality and fraternity goals outlined in our Constitution's Preamble. According to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the purposes and objectives of true democracy will only be advanced by their combination and coexistence.

According to the preamble of the Indian Constitution, India is a democratic nation that endeavours to uphold the rights of its citizens to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. The Government of India Act, 1935, which was enacted under British control and subject to over 100 revisions, presently consists of 395 Article split into 12 Parts and 12 Schedules, all of which broadly accept and in still democratic values. A committee of knowledgeable individuals headed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar drafted the Indian Constitution following lengthy parliamentary debates. Ambedkar deployed a complex understanding of rights to situate the domain of law. He distinguished the recitation of constitutional law from an act of the legislature.Ambedkar's ideas are adaptable and powerful enough to keep the nation together. He proposed principles for implementing and observing to address the country's challenges.

To conclude, Ambedkar believed that untouchability was a legacy of Hinduism rather than something inflicted by Brahma. As a result, he inspired Dalits to struggle against untouchability and raised their awareness of the issue. Ambedkar tried all kinds of strategies during his life for eradicating caste and untouchability, which oppressed the Dalits most. These strategies were political, legal, economic, religious, and social.

Recap

- ♦ Ambedkar emphasised emancipation and empowerment of Dalit.

- ♦ "Subaltern studies" refers to a perspective from below.

- ♦ The Schedule Caste, often known as the untouchable caste or depressed classes.

- ♦ The term "Harijan" literally means "Man of God."

- ♦ Dalit's belong to the bottom line of the hierarchical social structure.

- ♦ Ambedkar's nationalist movement was anti-Hindu and anti-Brahmanical in nature.

- Ambedkar called himself a progressive radical and occasionally a progressive conservative.

- For Ambedkar, Hinduism was an "oppressive religion."

- The three pillars of Ambedkar's idea of state socialism were state ownership of agricultural land; state maintenance of production resources; and a fair distribution of these resources to the public.

- To promote Dalit rights, Ambedkar established a number of magazines, such as Mook Nayak, Bahishkrit Bharat, and Equality Janta.

- Ambedkar proposed the annihilation of caste as a solution for discriminatory experience.

- Ambedkar advocated constitutional protection for oppressed classes via democracy, which is essential for experiencing social justice.

Objective Questions

1. What does the word "subaltern" mean in its broadest sense?

2. Which caste was Ambedkar born into?

3. Who publicly burned the classic Hindu work "Manusmriti"?

4. What was the name given to Ambedkar's nationalist movement?

5. Who refers to the "untouchables" as the "Harijan"?

6. What was the name of the interpretation of Buddhism that Ambedkar popularised?

7. Which was the first central organisation founded by Ambedkar which aimed at advancing socio economic development, education, and the welfare of "outcastes," or what were then known as the depressed classes?

8. Who is the father of the Indian constitution?

9. By what is the name by which his writings about the primitive tribe are known?

10. Which religion did Ambedkar adopt?

Answers

1. Subordination

2. Mahar

3. B.R Ambedkar

4. Dalit Bahujan Samaj

5. Mahatma Gandhi

6. Ambedkar Buddhism

7. Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha

8. B.R Ambedkar

9. Criminal tribe

10. Buddhism

Assignments

1. Define the concept subaltern and elaborate the Ambedkar's subaltern approach.

2. Discuss the term 'Dalit 'and its understanding with Ambedkar's movement.

3. Elaborate on Ambedkar's speech *Annihilation of Caste*.

4. What are the strategies put forward by *B.R. Ambedkar* to remove untouchability and Caste opposition exist in Indian society.

5. Look at this news: "2-year-old Dalit child enters temple; family fined Rs 25,000 for 'cleansing". An explicit example of discrimination against Dalits. Can you explain the relevance of the thoughts of Ambedkar in current society?

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David Hardiman: The Coming of Devi and Feeding the Baniya

UNIT

Learning Outcomes

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

♦ expose the basic aspects of subaltern approach in India

♦ introduce the work "Coming of Devi" and "Feeding the Baniya"

♦ narrate the socio-cultural significance of Hardiman's works

Prerequisites

What is the best way to keep people away from crimes? What are the strategies we adopt to redirect youth from drug usage? Or what are the simple and effective ways adults use to make their young ones more honest and truthful? Scolding, punishing, threatening etc are the common ways adopted to keep people away from social deviance. But there are other diplomatic, light and interesting ways that help in social conformity.

When beliefs are tied to the aspects of religion it acquires a better way of approval and acceptance among people. All around the world, tribal beliefs and cultural practices have the basis of God, Goddess and religious beliefs. Their everyday life activities revolve around these beliefs. Early morning baths, worships, evening rituals and seasonal festival practices etc are the reflection of people's attachment to the divine.

Sociologists say that a change or variation to these activities could be implemented only through an emotional and empathetic approach. It is because their belief systems are beyond rationality and reasoning. So, when a tribal group is to be rescued from the ill practice of producing and consuming alcohol, strict law implementation can turn out dysfunctional. Alcohol consumption among tribal practices can be prohibited only when they are set to believe that their Divine idol asks them to

do so. They obey their God. They change themselves according to the rules and principles of the religious divinity. Such an interesting case had been explored by Sociologist David Hardiman while studying Indian culture. A rapid change altered their consciousness which resulted in the rejection of drinking alcohol. Ultimately this modified the standard of living of the whole community.

Hardiman's other major work *Feeding the Baniya* imposes an exploration on the economic and ideological interconnections between the Landlords and peasants.

Keywords

Adivasi, Monograph, Barbarity, Domination, Subaltern, Divine, Devi movement

Discussion

6.2.1 Subaltern Approach

The domination and subordination in societies that lack concrete class division as in the industrial societies of the 20th century like European countries was emphasised with the term 'subaltern'. The term subaltern was first used by the Italian Marxist political activist, Antonio Gramsci and meant 'subordinate group', referring to any groups or persons belonging to a low rank, experiencing the domination and oppression of the elites in the country.

Subalternism in India

It was in the 1970s that Hardiman got involved in the study of history of subordinate groups with a group of historians who were focused on this. The group founded by Ranajit Guha called the Subaltern Studies Group or Subaltern Studies Collective used Gramscian principles to study Indian and South Asian history. This led to the publication of a series of volumes, Subaltern Studies, since 1981. The Volume VIII in the series was co-edited by Hardiman and he still remains in the editorial group of *Subaltern Studies*.

The colonialist and nationalist history that dominated the studies in South Asian history favoured the history of elites. The preference was given to the history of the erstwhile elites, be it colonial rulers or nationalist leaders. The history of the subordinate groups were sidelined or sometimes completely ignored. The *Subaltern Studies* was developed as a project to break away from this tendency. As part of this project, Hardiman studied nationalist movements at the local level, especially Gandhian leadership, power structures in the rural society, tribal movements, and so on. While he made use of anthropological research, he advocated for a more historical approach in anthropology and practised the same.

6.2.1.1 David Hardiman

David Hardiman is a historian who is focused on the history of modern India. Born in Pakistan and brought up in England, he finished his B.A. in History from London School of Economics. As a Research Fellow Hardiman spent his time in India during the 1980s at the Centre for Social Studies, Surat. South Asian History was his field of

study and he wrote on this from the 1960s. Over a decade of his life was spent in India, studying the colonial effects. Colonial period in South Asian history, especially the effects of the same on rural life found its space in the works of Hardiman. He also was interested in the power relations and the independence movement in India. Indian nationalism, environmental as well as medical history also interested him.

Fig 6.2.1 David Hardiman

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

6.2.2 The Coming of the Devi

David Hardiman published his work on adivasis and their assertion movement, focusing on the Devi movement in the Surat district. The work was originally published in 1987. The Devi movement refers to the many gatherings that were held across the Surat district, changing the life of adivasis, as instructed by a goddess.
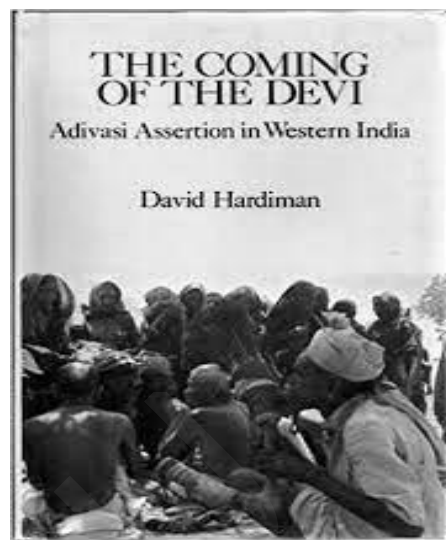

Fig 6.2.2 The coming of the Devi

Hardiman spends time among the adivasis, gaining as much information about the evolution of 'Devi'. The first appearance of Devi, (the divine idol) was as a Smallpox goddess, who was associated with infection of smallpox. Through time, this Devi evolved to be associated with the challenges of the time, be it natural calamities like bad crops, droughts, independence or even freedom movements. The Devi movement could create massive changes in the habits of the tribals. From improving lifestyle to joining nationalist schools, the effect of Devi was very powerful among tribals of Western India. The centrality of the religious ideology among the adivasis is also acknowledged through this study.

a) The communication with the 'Divine'

The goddess, Salabai spoke to the adivasis through the spirit mediums, asking them to give up liquor, meat and so on. The gathering held in the village of Khanpur to honour 'Devi' is the first eye-witness report of the

event that was reported in the Bombay Government records. The gathering was held on 9 November 1922 and reported two days later. Soon records of such events grew in numbers.

b) The Divine Commands

Divine commands were to change the habitual practices like drinking and eating meat. Later it included commands to vow in Gandhi's name, wear Khadi clothes and join nationalist schools. The movement that was earlier dismissed as temporary, soon gained a lasting impact as noted by Hardminan from the annual reports of 1921-22 by A. M. Macmillan, the collector of Surat district.

c) The Spread of the Movement

The movement, Hardiman observes, had similarities with the other adivasi movements that were happening in India, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Among the Oraons of Chota Nagpur, there were similar divine commands to give up superstitions, sacrifices and change eating habits. This movement that spread over Oraon in 1914-15 was called the *Tana Bhagat movement.* It also commanded the adivasis to not work in the fields of non-adivasi owners.

Unlike this, the Devi movement took a nationalist turn, with invocations against the British. The other movement that Hardiman draws on is among the Bhumij of Chhotanagpur in 1921. They spread rumours of the arrival of a king, an incarnation of God, who has asked Bhumij to give up consumption of liquor, meat and fish. The king's name was revealed as Gandhi Mahatma after three or four years. Hardiman, through available literature concludes that almost all major adivasi jatis of the middle-Indian region had made collective effort to change their established way of life during that time.

d) Sources of Information on Tribes and Adivasis

The accounts about these movements were short articles or minor parts of the books about the particular tribes. No dedicated monographs on the movements were available. Hardiman notes this to be due to the lack of archival sources like government files or newspaper reports. The relatively peaceful movements of adivasis did not have much importance at the time, compared to the nationalist movements happening with much vigour. Rarely will someone find an official record or newspaper report of these events. The only source of information was the oral evidence, collecting which required efforts to spend time in the villages and sharing their life. The anthropologists who had made this effort often lacked historical accuracy and were mediated by anthropological and sociological theories.

He attributes the silence of the historians to these movements to another factor. The adivasi movements did not fit into the image of Modern Indian history that was being painted by the nationalistic and socialist historians. Historians showed an inability to come to terms with a movement that was initiated and carried forward by adivasis.

In the works of Jugatram Dave, there is straight denial of the adivasi initiative. The doctrines to give up liquor and meat had been circulating among the adivasis before the arrival of Gandhi. Yet, Dave claims the Devi movement to be inspired from the activities of Gandhi. Mahadev Desai, on the other hand, tries to highlight the role of bourgeois social workers who entered these movements at the late stages. His attempt is to create an image of dedicated nationalist who are working to uplift the adivasis of the nation.

Hardiman says that the socialist historians and nationalist historians even created their own mythologies. The socialist believed that

they were able to make the adivasis realise their self-worth. Their accounts contained the middle class socialists who created a socialist consciousness among the adivasis. According to socialist historians of that time, the religious beliefs and its importance among the adivasis were insignificant. They believed the highly aggressive struggles were caused by the economic backwardness of the adivasis and their unhappiness in this. Whereas, less militant movements like the Devi movement were the result of the bourgeois forcing their religion upon the adivasis.

6.2.2.1 Further dimensions of Hardiman's Study

i. **Religious aspects**: Hardiman's attempt in this work is to view adivasis as subjects and study the consciousness that informs the political actions of the subaltern classes. He acknowledges the adivasis as the initiators of these political actions with regard to their own life. Religious beliefs and practices were the tool to spread this consciousness. Most of these actions also reflect a hope for better living. The various movements that were initiated by the adivasis attempted to improve the living standards of the adivasis like better housing, utensils and jewellery.

ii. Historical importance: Hardiman also discusses the various stereotypes that are built around the adivasis, claiming them to be the earliest inhabitants, who were nomads and hunter gatherers, living in isolation. He says that the adivasis are not always the original inhabitants, but part of the multiple migrations in and out of the regions. As for the way of life, not all adivasi groups are hunter gatherers or nomads. Many communities practise settled agricultural practices. From Dube's works, Hardiman observes that the isolation of the adivasis too is not much of a reality while there are tribes like the Gond and Bhils living as regionally dominant groups among others. The similarity in religious beliefs with caste peasantry is also another important observation. Hardiman concludes that the adivasi history is as rich and complex as the history of their rulers and requires more attention in the studying of history of India.

iii. Superior-inferior implications: According to Hardiman, the terms like jangi jati, kaliparaj were not adequate to refer to adivasis. This was due to the reason that the adivasis themselves did not identify with these terms, and also found these insulting. The more polite equivalents used by Gandhi and his followers like raniparaj, vanyajati and girijan were also not preferred by the adivasis. These terms were patronising and implied a 'jungliness' or 'barbarity'. The adivasis living in forest tracts had also reduced with the decreasing forest covers in India. As for the term 'tribe', it carried with it evolutionary connotations which implied a racist take on adivasis. This suggested tribes as a group of inferior races, who had lost their prominence in the fight against the superior races that made up modern man. The word tribe also has been used to refer to the adivasis as a group that has failed to modernise or evolve into better beings like the civilised or modern man. Cultural evolution claims tribes as the primitive man who will culturally give way to modern man, who is more evolved in their life than the tribes. All these imply an inferior status of the adivasis.

iv. Insider-outsider implication: The adivasi identity evolved as a result of colonial rule. The colonial rulers extended their governance to a lot of communities who led a relatively free life until the arrival of the British. They had stayed free from outside state control until colonial rule. The landlords, moneylenders and traders found their way to these communities under the protection of newly arrived colonial authorities. This exploitation created 'adivasi' and 'outsider'

opposition, which soon gave way to country wide identity for all groups that suffered the same fate of exploitation. The communities who were forced into labour and deprived of their land soon fell into a collective identity. This historical development of these communities relate better to the term adivasi. It is also the preferred term among adivasis while referring to themselves. Hardiman clarifies that it is for this reason, he chooses the word adivasi and it does imply the meaning of 'earliest inhabitants'

v. Exploring the history of the oppressed: Hardiman conducts the study of the adivasi movement as it would enrich the knowledge about the central themes of history during the colonial period in India. According to his subaltern perspective, the history of the oppressed is as important as the elite to understand the history completely. The elaborate study of the movements would throw light on "the religiosity of peasant consciousness, the structures of pre-colonial society, the impact of colonial rule and laws on this society, the manner in which the indian peasantry of which the adivasis are an important component have both adapted and struggled against this harsh new social system". Moreover, these movements are all observed to adopt a nationalist content and thus would allow us to understand Indian nationalism at the village level. Therefore, instead of dismissing these movements as ignorance and superstitions, he makes a full-length study of the movement. Through this he believes he can provide a history that will do some justice to these communities who have suffered many grievances over the years.

The detailed anthropological study details various aspects of the adivasis. The relation of adivasis with the state and their form of community living is studied in detail. Another important aspect that Hardiman attends to is the ceremonial significance

of drinks like *daru* and *toddy*. The drinks had religious significance as offerings to God and drinking *daru* was often part of rituals. This significance made it possible for the moneylenders and liquor-dealers to exploit the adivasis after the arrival of colonial rulers. From this background, he tracks the emergence of new movements of resistance. The role of resisting against the exploiters as well as appropriating themselves to the values of dominant high-caste Hindus was made possible by the commands in the Devi movement. It can be therefore seen as resistance against their exploitation, as well as a movement for better social status.

Hardiman makes a detailed account of the Devi movement through available archival sources and with extensive use of oral evidence. He records the slogans and recollection of many adivasis during fieldwork and shared life among adivasis for years. He builds a history of the adivasis parallel to the Modern Indian history of the nationalists and socialists.
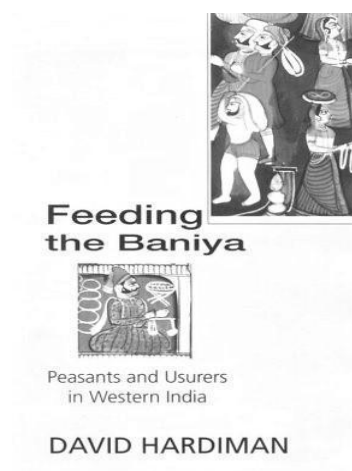
6.2.3 Feeding the Baniya

Fig 6.2.3 Feeding the Baniya

Feeding the Baniya: Peasants and Usurers in Western India is the work by David Hardiman. The study gives important insights into a relationship between peasants and usurers. By definition, an usurer is a person who lends money at unreasonably

high rates of interest. The peasant-usurers connection has been crucial to life in rural India. Hardiman's work explores the relationship in an integrated way, examining how states extended support to usurers. It also explores the ways how Baniyas exerted a power which was both economic and ideological.

a) Usurers

Usurers or money lenders who lend money to the people of a village at a given interest rate is common practice in Indian villages. Even with the arrival of institutional credit like banks and other financial institutions, the usurers maintained their control over money lending in most parts of India. The moneylenders were called *Sahukars*, meaning 'doer of righteous deeds'. Most regions had particular castes who performed this occupation and the caste was respected by the villagers. This control cannot be examined on economic terms alone. Hardiman urges the historians to look at the social, political and cultural aspect of maintaining this control.

b) Peasant- Usurer Relationship

Caste and religiosity is an important part for social organisation in India. According to Kosambi, the practice of usury in India dates back to around the sixth century. The occupation of sahukars or moneylenders emerged around the 14th century, with the Delhi Sultanate extending state control and expanding trade. The state, through the sahukars, ensured that the peasants had money for better production as well as the fair share of tax reached the state from the surplus produced by the peasants. Sahukars in this way reduced the efforts of the state. The sahukars or the usurers lend money to the peasants for their needs like buying new livestock or equipment for their farms. This money was repaid through farming produce. A large part of the agricultural produce was taken by these sahukars. Since the farmers

had to return to them for money and credit in future, they were forced to give away the major part of their produce as demanded by the usurers. It was this debt that ensured the service of peasants to the usurers.

There was large support for usury in India. It was a specialised occupation and the state extended their support for this. They did not try to regulate or control the interest rates that were imposed by the usurers on the peasants. The usurers were closely associated with the ruling classes who provided cultural validation for the activities of sahukars. The members of the caste who functioned as sahukars in an area were highly respected.

c) Baniya Usurers

In Western India, mainly Gujarat and Rajasthan, the usury was controlled by the Baniya caste. By around the seventeenth century, they spread control to Maharashtra. The Gujarati migrants were known as 'Gujars' and the Rajasthanis were called 'Marwaris'. These terms are also used in other parts of India, even South India. For Baniyas, business was a family matter and all male members were trained in business management from their early ages. Though a respectable caste, the baniyas were also known for tricking and adultering to increase their profit. The Baniyas maintained a strong unity within their caste, and ensured their social separation through avoiding interdining and similar involvement with the other castes. Jainsim or Vallabhacharya Vaishnavism dominated the religious life of Baniyas. Both these faiths provided a moral support for the caste members in accumulating capital. Charity was seen as the way to obtain divine merit.

The arrival of the British and their policies, made the control exerted by Baniyas even stronger. The British supplied the credit to the peasants through the usurers. Till mid-nineteenth century, the Britishers collected

tax through the sahukars, who took money from their clients i.e. peasants. This was a convenient practice for the British. They also enforced laws that made the debt repayments a legally bound process. This gave more power and control over the peasants to the Usurers. There was very little check on the sahukars hoarding products and creating shortages to increase profit. Overall, the arrival of the British made the Baniyas much stronger.

The Baniyas adapted their lending practice through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial rule, always turning things to their advantage. Even peasant movements, revolts and similar resistance were successfully turned to make the usurers' relationship with the subaltern to be always at their benefit.

Despite being exploitative, the peasants often returned to these Baniyas for credit. A lot of villagers preferred this over the banks that would provide them money at much cheaper interest rates. Hardiman observes and noted this to be the result of a relationship between the usurer and peasant that went beyond the economic gains. The peasant family and the baniya families had associations that date back many generations. The two families were often bound in their transactions and it was very unlikely that the other families in the Baniya community would lend money to the peasant trying to obtain credit. This was maintained by strict community rules in the Baniya caste council. For the peasants, the Baniya family who lent them credit were like a protector, who would ensure that the peasant family did not go into complete poverty. In so far as a Baniya was concerned, a peasant family going into poverty would mean the loss of business. Yet this interest ensured safety for the peasant family.

Hardiman's exploration of the usurer and peasant community relation is based on the Baniya community of Western India, who are the traditional moneylenders. Hardiman attempts to explore these aspects in trying to understand the ideological as well as economic power of the Baniyas over the peasants. The cultural and political factors that contributed to the strengthening of the stronghold that Baniyas had over the peasant population is explored with careful attention.

d) Strategies of Baniyas

The hoarding of the grains by the Baniyas caused famines when rains failed or harvest was low. But the Baniyas would provide for the peasants in the name of charity. They often ignored the fact that these famines were caused by their hoarding and acted as saviours for the peasants during food shortages. But these injustice and exploitation did not go without resistance. Hardiman studies the revolts in Deccan and the resistance in the Sahyadris towards the Baniya exploitation. Despite all the tensions and revolts, the Baniya-peasant relation continued its dynamics over many centuries. The dominance exerted by the Baniyas were much deeper than the economic control and this explains why the peasants often returned to the same usurers to obtain credit rather than looking for direct means from state institutions. For the peasants, the usurers were their middlemen to the larger capitalist world. Usury linked the agrarian producers with the capitalist world and its institutions.

e) The Idea of Hegemony in Hardiman's discussions of Baniya

The idea of hegemony also finds its space in Hardiman's discussions of the Baniyas control over the peasants. Hegemony was developed as an idea by Gramsci to explain the control that a dominant group exerts on the others their social, cultural and economic life. Using this concept of hegemony, Hardiman explores how Baniyas have used the beliefs and values of the villagers to make themselves more powerful. Even with

changing rulers, the support was extended to usury, which allowed the Baniyas to exploit the peasants in order to feed themselves.

Exploring both the exploitation and resistance, this work too is an attempt from his part to build an historical perspective around the life of subaltern. The ideological justification of exploitation by the mediators and the state support for the mediators are two factors that Hardiman focuses on. Hardiman brings out a hegemonic control over the peasant caste both by the upper caste and the state. The narration that most subaltern movements were a byproduct of the national struggle for freedom is again questioned by Hardiman.

Similar to '*The Coming of Devi*', this book also constructs the history of the subaltern as independent of the elitist intervention. The movements and history of peasants is studied as a parallel rather than a result of the national movements.

To conclude, the colonial era in South Asian history had been the main subject of Hardiman's writings, with a particular emphasis on the effects of colonial rule on rural society, power dynamics at different levels, the Indian independence movement with a focus on the popular foundations of Indian nationalism, and environmental and medical history.

Pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods of Indian history are all covered by "Feeding the Baniya." It is stated that the institution of usury has experienced a metamorphosis in the time since Indian independence due to the examination of the role of merchant and usurer capital in the appropriation of the excess of the peasants. Hardiman had once more offered a different insight into the changing world of the villagers as they attempted to adapt to the changes in the larger society around them, much like in the case of his study of the Devi movement. Additionally, it was generating unique knowledge that could be applied by students to do their research.

Recap

♦ David Hardiman employed subaltern approach to study Indian society

♦ Hardiman studied the nationalist movements and other resistance movements among the subaltern or subordinate groups.

♦ His work, The Coming of Devi, focuses on the Devi movement among Adivasis and the initiators of the movement.

♦ The gathering held in the village of Khanpur to honour 'Devi' is the first eye-witness report of the event that was reported in the Bombay Government records.

♦ He disagreed with the nationalist and socialist historians who recorded these movements as a result of some nationalist or middle-class intervention.

- Hardiman acknowledges the adivasis and peasants as groups with their own consciousness that initiated their resistance movements.

- The idea of hegemony also finds its space in Hardiman's discussions of the Baniyas control over the peasants

- The book, Feeding the Baniya, by Hardiman is a detailed ethnographic account of the evolving nature of the Baniya control over the peasants, with change in rulers and peasant resistance.

- The cultural and ideological factors are identified as equally important as the economic power, in strengthening the Baniya control.

Objective Questions

1. Who coined the term "subaltern"?

2. Who is the founder of the Subaltern studies group?

3. Which is the work on adivasis and their assertion movement, focusing on the Devi movement in the Surat district by David Hardiman ?

4. When was the first Devi gathering reported in the official records of the Bombay government?

5. Which social relationship is illustrated in Hardiman's work 'Feeding the Baniya'?

6. What was the adivasi movement that spread over Oraons in 1914-15 known as?

7. What is the aspect associated with Sahukars?

8. What is the meaning of Sahukars according to David Hardiman ?

9. Which caste did sahukars of Gujarat and Rajasthan belonged to?

10. What was the dominant faith among the Baniyas?

11. Which work of David Hardiman studies about the 'divine commands'?

Answers

1. Antonio Gramsci

2. Ranajit Guha

3. The coming of the Devi : Adivasi assertion in Western India.(1987)

4. 9th November 1922

5. Tana Bhagat movement

6. Peasant-usurer

7. Moneylenders

8. 'Doer of righteous deeds'

9. Baniya

10. Jainism and Vallabhacharya Vaishnavism

11. *The Coming of Devi*

Assignments

1. 'Despite all the tensions and revolts, the Baniya-peasant relation continued its dynamics over many centuries'. Critically examine the statement.

2. Bring out the idea of 'Hegemony' in Hardiman's discussions of Baniya.

3. Compare and contrast David Hardiman's works 'Feeding the Baniya' and 'The coming of the Devi'.

4. Explain the sociological implications of Hardiman's work on the Baniya caste.

5. Comprehend the role of peasant- usurer relationship in Indian society.

Suggested Reading

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Sociology in India

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